Chapter 5

Kurdish Politics in Regional Context

In the previous chapters, I discussed international and regional variables that shaped Kurdish politics and affected the status of the Kurds in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. I will now examine four regional factors in particular that have impacted Kurdish conditions—Iran-Iraq relations during Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's reign, the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988, the 1991 Gulf War, and the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of the Ba'thi regime in Baghdad.

IRAN-IRAQ RELATIONS AND PERSIAN GULF SECURITY

Since the seventh-century defeat of Iran by the Arabs, ethnic and religious differences have created tensions in Iranian-Arab relations. Although Iranians adopted Islam, they resisted Arabization and retained cultural and ethnic distinctiveness. Two centuries after the Arab invasion, for example, Iran experienced a major literary, cultural, and sociopolitical revival that strained Iranian-Arab relations. They became particularly strained when the Arabs "forgot Islam's universalist and egalitarian dimensions, viewed its Arab origins as proof of their racial superiority, and discriminated against non-Arab converts."[1] The Iranians' conversion to Shi'a Islam in the sixteenth century further alienated Iran from the predominantly Sunni Arabs.

In the Middle East in the twentieth century, the largely sociocultural conflict between Iranians and Arabs acquired a political dimension as well. As the Ottoman Empire disintegrated and independent, and eventually sovereign, Arab states emerged, Iranian and Arab nationalism began to clash, especially with the growth of pan-Arab nationalism in the Middle East. Pan-Arabists sought to unite all Arabs and encouraged the secession of Arab areas in other countries so they could be part of a unified Arab nation. Iran was considered an obstacle to the realization of Arab unity because the nation some pan-Arabists sought to create included the oil-rich Iranian province of Khuzistan.

The gulf between Iran and the proponents of pan-Arabism widened after the overthrow of Egypt's pro-Western monarchy in 1952 and the emergence of Gamal Abdul Nasser as the champion of Arab nationalism. The new leader's promotion of pan-Arabism projected Egypt

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into the forefront of Arab politics as the torchbearer of anti-European and anti-imperialist struggles. With respect to the Gulf, Nasser's bete noire was British military and political presence, especially its domination of its client state of Iraq. Thus, the downfall of the nationalist government of Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh in Iran in a British-US-sponsored coup in 1953, and the pro-Western Shah's accession to the throne, heightened Nasser's fear of Western encirclement of his pan-Arab regime.

After the restoration of the Shah to the Pahlavi throne, the United States "encouraged Iran to establish a variety of formal and informal security arrangements with other U.S. allies in the region in the decades after the 1953 coup."[2] While Dr. Mossadegh had avoided joining either the Soviet or Western camp and wanted to maintain good relations with Arab nationalists, given the Shah's urgent need for Western support to shore up his regime, his fear of Soviet-supported instability, and his apprehension about the impact of radical pan-Arabism, he was very receptive to the idea of joining a Western security alliance. The Shah was particularly attracted to a proposal first espoused by the U.S. secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, to establish an alliance of "Northern Tier" states, including Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan. This proposed security arrangement was designed to allow the "Northern Tier" countries to defend themselves, with U.S. assistance, against the spread of Soviet communism and to prevent "contamination" of Arab nationalism with communist ideology.[3] Great Britain, however, opposed a regional alliance system that did not include its client state of Iraq. The United States, on the other hand, did not wish to offend Egypt and other Arab nationalist forces by including the monarchical Iraq in such an alliance because the Hashemite monarchy was viewed by Arab nationalists as an appendage of British imperialism. Thus, President Dwight Eisenhower was leery of including Iraq in a U.S.-supported security arrangement.

Although Dulles's proposed alliance did not materialize, Great Britain succeeded in establishing a regional security system. In February 1955, Britain pressured Iraq into signing a mutual defense agreement, the Baghdad Pact, with Turkey. There were indications that Pakistan was also being pressured by Britain to join the alliance, which it did in September 1955. After receiving the endorsement of Washington, Iran joined the Baghdad Pact in October. Although the United States did not formally join, it became a driving force behind the Baghdad Pact by becoming a major provider of military aid and equipment to the members of the alliance.[4]

As Mark Gasiorowski noted, the Baghdad Pact was "beset with problems from its inception."[5] President Nasser was disturbed by Iraq's decision to join a pro-Western alliance under the tutelage of Great Britain, whose colonial policies had made it anathema to Arab nationalists. As a result, Egypt initiated a policy to destabilize the Iraqi monarchy and turned to the Soviet bloc countries for arms purchases, after being spurned by the West. Nasser's first purchase was from Czechoslovakia in 1955 to counter what he considered to be growing Western encirclement meant to isolate Egypt in the region. The Shah, in turn, viewed the emerging Moscow-Cairo ties as a threat to Iran's security interests. Thus began the era of the Nasser-Shah cold war.[6]

A number of tactics were used by Nasser against the Shah. One tactic, which infuriated the Shah and injured Iran's sense of nationalism, was Cairo's continuous reference to the "Arabian Gulf' and the "occupied south" when referring to the Persian Gulf and Khuzistan, respectively.[7]

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Although Nasser had some success in convincing Arabs to ignore the historical name of the region, he was less successful in destabilizing the Shah's regime or gaining a permanent foothold in the Gulf region. Another tactic used by Nasser to heighten Persian-Arab tensions was to draw a parallel between "Iranian immigration to the Gulf states and the Zionists' earlier immigration to Palestine."[8]

Nasser's pan-Arabism did not generate much enthusiasm among conservative Arab regimes in the Gulf, but it did strike a familiar chord with the antimonarchical and anti-British forces that were operating in Iraq. When these forces managed to overthrow the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq in July 1958, the Baghdad Pact was dealt a major blow. The new republican regime in Iraq boycotted meetings of the Baghdad Pact and then formally withdrew in March 1959. The remaining members transferred their membership to a successor alliance, the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), with new headquarters in Ankara.

Iran's membership in the Baghdad Pact was never popular with the Iranian people, who considered the Shah's regime to be a Western client with no popular legitimacy. However, the Shah was adamant in his decision to remain an active member of the Baghdad Pact, both as a deterrent to a Soviet threat and as insurance against internal upheavals against his regime. After the violent overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy, the Shah's determination to remain a CENTO member became even more pronounced. At the same time, the Shah knew that Iran's membership in CENTO did not automatically oblige the West to intervene on its behalf in case of foreign aggression. Therefore, he pressed for a bilateral defense agreement with the United States, which was signed in March 1959. Under the terms of this agreement, in the case of aggression against Iran, the United States would take appropriate measures to defend Iran, including the use of armed forces if mutually agreed upon.[9]

Iran's CENTO membership continued to heighten Iranian-Egyptian tensions, as well as contribute to the rapid deterioration in Iran's relations with the "radical" regime of Abdul Karim Ghassem in Baghdad. When diplomatic relations between Cairo and Tehran were finally broken in the summer of 1960, President Nasser accelerated public attacks on Iran's pro-Western posture and coordinated these attacks with similar ones emanating from Baghdad: The Shah sought to counter these moves by improving Iran's relations with the conservative Arab states of the Gulf, which felt threatened by Nasser's radical pan-Arabism and Ghassem's support for the goals of Egyptian foreign policy.[10]

Notwithstanding Egyptian and Iraqi fears of encirclement by Western countries and their regional clients, CENTO never developed into an integrated alliance system. More than a decade after its formation, the organization was still unable to draft a contingency plan for conducting limited wars or establishing a joint military command structure. Although U.S. policymakers reportedly developed a plan to use tactical nuclear weapons in the region in the event of a war with the Soviet Union, the planning was done outside of the CENTO framework, and perhaps unbeknownst to the member countries. Furthermore, joint military exercises that were conducted under CENTO's auspices were marginal and did not contribute to the war-fighting or defense capabilities of the member states."[11] CENTO's countersubversion committee did little to develop cooperative schemes in combating internal challenges to member states. The regional members of CENTO, however, did occasionally aid

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each other in the suppression of tribal uprisings, but such cooperative actions were undertaken under bilateral agreements.[12] Although CENTO continued to function until 1979, when Iran and Pakistan withdrew, it had lost its effectiveness as a military alliance system by the late 1960s. Nevertheless, it remained politically important and continued to create friction in Iran-Iraq relations until the overthrow of the Shah's regime.

Until the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy, the Kurdish card had not been played by either Iran or Iraq against each other. Although occasional Kurdish cross-border raids and hot pursuits had caused the two sides to protest violations of each other's territorial integrity, both Iran and Iraq, as well as Turkey, sought to enforce the terms of the 1937 Sa'dabad Pact. After the advent of republican Iraq in 1958 and the coming to power of a "pan-Arab nationalist" group, however, playing the Kurdish card became an attractive political and military weapon against the Shah's government.

Shortly after coming to power, Abdul Karim Ghassem declared the 1937 pact between Iran and Iraq, which had demarcated the boundary between the two countries and outlined their sovereignty rights in the Shatt al-Arab, to be invalid. Ghassem then laid claim to the entire waterway, and in 1959, he ordered Iraqi troops to block Iranian oil tankers from using the Shatt al-Arab. As discussed in Chapter 3, Ghassem also endeavored to settle the Kurdish problem by initiating peace talks with Mullah Mostafa Barzani. As a "goodwill gesture," Ghassem even provided Mullah Mostafa with weapons and allowed his *peshmerga* to use Iraqi territory to launch attacks inside Iran. Mullah Mostafa's forays into Iran were militarily insignificant and only resulted in minor disturbances in border towns such as Marivan and Baneh. However, by playing his Kurdish card against the Shah's government, Ghassem opened up a Pandora's box, and perhaps contributed to the shaping of the Shah's strategic calculus with respect to the Kurds. In fact, Ghassem's tactic of using Mullah Mostafa to destabilize the Shah's regime backfired against Iraq as the Shah, in conjunction with Israel and the United States, co-opted Mullah Mostafa into a scheme to destabilize the Iraqi government in the early 1970s.

Iran's security relationship with Israel in the post-1953 period became important for both countries. In fact, with the exception of its bilateral security ties with the United States, no other country managed to forge as close a security relationship with the Shah's regime as Israei.[13] Although the genesis of Iran's relationship with Israel dated back to 1950 when the Shah's regime extended de facto recognition to the Jewish state, military and security relations between the two countries were cemented in 1960, when the first team of Israeli intelligence officers arrived in Tehran to train both military and secret police operatives in Iran.

The military intelligence axis soon developed into the most important aspect of Iranian-Israeli relations. Israel's intelligence network, Mossad, and Iran's secret police/security organization, *Sazeman-e Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar* (Organization of Information and State Security-SAVAK), collaborated for nearly a quarter of a century. Their cooperation ranged from exchanging information and providing training for SAVAK officials, both in Iran and Israel, to providing funds and weaponry to the Kurdish forces in Iraq in the 1970s. Iran's economic relations with Israel were also quite extensive. By the mid-1970s, Israeli exports to Iran were worth over $70 million per year, and Iran had become the principal supplier of petroleum to Israel.[14] According to one account, a secret clause in the Egyptian-Israeli disengagement treaty of September 1975 stipulated that Iran would undertake appropriate

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measures to satisfy Israel's future petroleum needs after Egypt regained control of the oilfields of Sinai.[15]

Both Israel and Iran had pragmatic reasons for forging an informal alliance against Iraq and other Arab "radicals" and proponents of pan-Arabism. According to a CIA report, a principal goal of Israeli foreign policy was the development of pragmatic relationships with the non-Arab Muslim nations of the Middle East. The report described the formation in 1958 of a formal trilateral arrangement involving the Israeli Mossad, the Turkish intelligence service, and Iran's SAVAK. The main purpose of this arrangement was to develop an anti-Arab policy among the high-level officials in Ankara and Tehran.[16] With respect to Iran, development of an anti-Arab posture was aided by Israel's transmission of intelligence reports on issues affecting Iran, including developments in Iraq and Egypt, and assistance for the Shah's government in its support of the Kurdish uprising in Iraq.[17]

The CIA report, in effect, was a brief summary of the Periphery Doctrine in Israeli foreign policy, which had been promoted by Prime Minister David Ben Gurion. This doctrine entailed the formation of a "peripheral pact" involving a "bloc of states situated on the periphery of the Middle East, and connected to Israel in a triangle, with Turkey and Iran in the north, and Ethiopia in the south."[18] The common denominator among these countries was their anti-Sovietism and fear of radical Arab nationalism. An underlying motivation for this arrangement was to promote the Israeli view of the importance of non-Arab elements in the Middle Eastern political scene, a view that was appealing to the Shah of Iran. As Ben Gurion stated: "The Middle East is not an exclusively Arab area; on the contrary, the majority of its inhabitants are not Arabs. The Turks, the Persians and the Jews—without taking into account the Kurds and the other non-Arab minorities—are more numerous than the Arabs in the Middle East."[19] As the Shah indicated to Uri Lubrani, Israel's chief diplomat in Tehran, one of the chief reasons for his country's alliance with Israel was that the Jewish state served as a deterrent to an Iraqi or other Arab attack on Iran. "From the Shah's perspective, Iran's alliance with Israel would serve as a strategic decoy in order to divert Arab attention and resources away from Iran. The Shah believed that his Israeli connection would provide a deterrence to Arab regimes because it would create the impression that if an Arab state were to attack Iran, Israel would take advantage of this pretext to strike Iraq's western flank."[20]

Although the Shah's perception of Israel's reaction to a possible Iraqi attack on Iran may have been different from that of the Israeli decision makers, both Israel and Iran concurred on the desirability of using the Kurds to keep the Iraqi forces preoccupied with internal challenges, thus preventing them from exerting pressure on Israel's eastern flank and Iran's border regions. The first concrete Israeli-Iranian cooperation on the Kurdish issue occurred in the early 1960s when SAVAK officials acted as intermediaries between Mullah Mostafa and Israeli military and intelligence officers. The Iranians arranged a meeting between Mullah Mostafa and an Israeli delegation headed by the chief of staff, Lieutenant General Tsvi Tsur. After being driven to the town of Piranshahr on the Iraqi border, the Israeli officials changed into Kurdish costumes and walked across the border into Iraqi Kurdistan. Once inside Iraq, the delegation held talks with Mullah Mostafa and promised to provide weapons and training for his forces that would enable them to conduct a full-scale offensive against Iraqi forces.

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Beginning in 1963, Israel started to channel large-scale military aid through the Shah's SAVAK to Mullah Mostafa's forces. Israeli military advisers accompanied the arms shipments to the Kurds, and in August 1965, they set up permanent training camps in the Kurdish mountains to train soldiers.[21] After the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the number of Israeli weapons shipments to the Kurds increased dramatically as Mullah Mostafa was supplied with Soviet weaponry captured from the Syrian and Egyptian armies during the war. In pursuit of further military assistance, Mullah Mostafa visited Israel in September 1967, resulting in an Israeli commitment of $50,000 a month to his forces.[22]

An evaluation by the U.S. government's National Foreign Assessment Center regarding the success of Israeli-Iranian involvement in Kurdistan concluded that despite several major Iraqi offensives against the Kurds, Mullah Mostafa's forces were able to withstand the onslaught of Iraqi military actions. The report attributed their success both to the level of Israeli-Iranian military assistance to the Kurds and to the Shah's policy of allowing Iranian territory to be used as a supply route and sanctuary for Kurdish forces. The report further concluded that the Shah was not worried about the spill-over effects that the success of Mullah Mostafa's movement would have on his own Kurdish areas. The Shah argued that there was no real danger of an uprising among Iranian Kurds and that he could afford to play his Kurdish card against the Iraqi regime with impunity.[23]

Israeli-Iranian cooperation was conducted in utmost secrecy. However, in September 1972, U.S. syndicated columnist Jack Anderson reported on the monthly Israeli cash subsidy of $50,000 and the Shah's role in this affair. Anderson's report, which was based on a CIA analysis of the situation in Kurdistan, also stated that Iranian and Israeli motives in supporting the Kurdish uprising in Iraq were based on their mutual desire to keep the Iraqi regime embroiled in an internal conflict.[24] Israeli-Iranian involvement in Kurdish affairs was hotly contested by the parties involved. In an interview given in 1976, Mullah Mostafa contended that he never accepted a monthly stipend of $50,000 from the Israelis because in his view the future of the Kurdish cause was closely tied to the fortunes of the "Arab, Turkish, and Iranian people. What happens to them happens to us."[25] However, Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin admitted that Israel provided Mullah Mostafa with money, arms, and military advisers to sustain his fight against the Iraqi regime.[26]

The role played by the United States in bolstering the Kurdish uprising in Iraq during the 1970s is worth noting. During the 1960s, Mullah Mostafa appealed for support for the Kurdish revolt from a variety of sources. When he approached U.S. authorities in the early 1960s, they did not respond favorably.[27] However, when the second Ba'thi regime came to power in Baghdad in 1968, with its radical rhetoric of pan-Arabism and anti-imperialism, the United States revised its position. Like its two regional allies, Iran and Israel, U.S. authorities began to view the Kurds as a strategic asset to be used in keeping the Iraqi regime at bay. Edmund Ghareeb, quoting a report that appeared in *Al-Ahad*, a pro-Iraqi Lebanese publication, contended that the first U.S. overtures toward Mullah Mostafa occurred in August 1969. According to this report, two U.S. military officers attached to CENTO flew to his headquarters and conducted an extensive discussion, leading to the signing of a secret agreement through which Mullah Mostafa received $14 million from the United States.[28]

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The secret agreement outlined the expectations of each side and contained a number of specific points. What follows are some of the highlights of this agreement:

- The subject of U.S. aid must be kept secret from all, including high-ranking members within the Kurdish movement.
- The aim of insurgency was to overthrow the Baath regime.
- The Kurdish movement must not cause any harm to Iran in the future, particularly by supporting Iranian Kurds. In return, the Iranian government would not take any actions hostile to the Kurdish movement.
- Doors would be closed to communists seeking to join the movement; the Kurdish movement must not protect them.
- All Soviet aid offers must be rejected and the United States immediately notified of such offers.
- The United States government considered Barzani the man responsible for the movement and would accept only his objections.[29]

Although the United States denied the existence of the agreement, it soon became clear that the CIA was heavily involved with the Kurdish uprising in the first half of the *1970s*.

The details of U.S. involvement in the Kurdish uprising became known during the Pike House Committee hearings (the Pike Report), portions of which were published in the *Village Voice*. According to the Pike Report, when the Shah of Iran met with President Nixon and his secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, in May 1972, he asked them to join Iran in supporting the Kurdish revolt in Iraq. Although the United States had refrained from getting involved in Kurdish affairs, Nixon and Kissinger found the Shah's offer appealing. Consequently, in May 1972, President Nixon approved a plan for the CIA to secretly channel $16 million to Mullah Mostafa over the next three years.[30] Both President Nixon and Henry Kissinger sought to keep this arrangement secret. Even the U.S. State Department was kept in the dark with respect to the evolving CIA-Mullah Mostafa ties.[31]

The question arises: Why did the United States reverse its position against getting closely entangled with the Kurdish uprising in Iraq? One explanation is that both the Shah of Iran and Israel finally succeeded in enticing the United States to help Mullah Mostafa's movement. Although there may be some evidence to support this contention, the timing of the U.S. policy shift needs to be analyzed within the context of changes in Iraqi politics.

By early 1972, the Ba'th Party of Iraq had concluded that closer ties with the Soviet Union would help counter Iranian pressure and, by implication, make it costly for the Shah to play his Kurdish card against Iraq.

> There was little ideology in this decision. Despite the secular socialism advocated by the Ba'th, Saddam [Husseini had never been a serious student of Marxism-Leninism, and his perception of the Soviet Union had always been purely instrumental. For him, Moscow offered the possibility of resolving several conflicts at once. It was an important counterweight to the Iranian threat.... As long as Iran feared its large neighbor to the north, it could not threaten its smaller neighbors... .

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> The creation of a Soviet-Iraq axis, Saddam reasoned, was bound to bring the Shah back to his senses.[32]

Furthermore, formal Soviet-Iraqi cooperation would allow Baghdad to import major weapons from the Soviet Union and enable the Ba'thi regime to increase its deterrent power against the Shah's regime. Because of the long-established links between Mullah Mostafa and the Soviet Union, the Ba'th argued, closer Iraqi-Soviet ties would also allow Moscow to act as an intermediary between Baghdad and Mullah Mostafa to settle the Kurdish dispute.

An equally compelling reason for Saddam Hussein's overtures to Moscow during the spring of 1972 was to gain support for the Bath Party's decision to nationalize the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC). Many radical and nationalist elements within the Ba'th were demanding that Iraq lay the foundation for its future economic independence by taking steps to control its own resources, especially its vast petroleum reserves. The Ba'thi leadership was also aware that its ambitious socioeconomic development plans for the country could not be satisfactorily implemented without a major shift in the country's oil policies. It was within this context that the IPC was finally nationalized on June 1, 1972.

Prior to formal nationalization of the IPC, the Ba'thi government succeeded in signing a cooperation agreement with the Soviet Union. The Iraqi-Soviet Treaty of Cooperation and Friendship, which was signed in April 1972, marked the second time that the Soviets had signed such a treaty with a Middle Eastern country. The first time was a similar treaty with Egypt that had been signed at Moscow's behest at a time when Egyptian-Soviet relations were exhibiting signs of strain. The treaty with Iraq, on the other hand, was signed at the urging of Baghdad in order to provide, among other things, the psychological and political shield that Iraq needed to proceed with nationalization of its petroleum resources. The Ba'thi government was well aware of the British-US coup that was organized in Iran after that country's petroleum resources were nationalized by Dr. Mossadegh's government in 1953.

Despite the fanfare and radical rhetoric that preceded nationalization of the IPC, the act itself had no more than symbolic value; it did not alter Iraq's dependence on Western oil companies.[33] For example, Compagnie Francaise des Petroles (CFP), the French company participating in the IPC, was offered "special treatment" in the post-nationalization era, and Saddam Hussein agreed to sell France 23.75 percent of the oil produced by the Iraqi Company for Oil Operations (ICOO), as the nationalized IPC was now called. This represented the CFP's share in the old IPC.[34]

Both the signing of the friendship treaty with the Soviet Union and the impending nationalization of the IPC were instrumental in alerting the Nixon-Kissinger team to the possible danger of increased Soviet influence in the region, and led to a major commitment by the United States to join the Tehran-Tel Aviv axis in supporting the Kurdish insurgency. Shortly after nationalization of the IPC, Mullah Mostafa promised the United States that if his Kurdish *peshmerga* prevailed against the Iraqi forces and succeeded in establishing a foothold in Kirkuk, he would turn over the Kirkuk oil fields to the United States, and it could depend on a reliable ally in OPEC.[35] In an interview with the *Washington Post* in June 1973, Mullah Mostafa again sought to commit the United States to his cause by stating that if U.S. support were substantial, the Kurds could take over Kirkuk and give the oil fields to U.S. companies to

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operate, hence negating the recent nationalization of the IPC.[36]

Although the United States did not take Mullah Mostafa's claims seriously, the Iraqi government used his statements to justify the Ba'th Party's paranoia about an alleged Iranian-Israeli-US master plan to dismember Iraq and establish a puppet state in Iraqi Kurdistan. Iraq's fear of dismemberment was heightened by periodic reports about the direct involvement of "large numbers" of Iranian army soldiers fighting on the side of Kurds. According to one Iraqi analyst, by 1975, Iran had deployed two army regiments inside Iraq.[37] However, as the Pike Report indicated, and as the downfall of the Kurdish insurgency clearly showed, neither the Shah nor the United States wanted Mullah Mostafa to prevail militarily over the Iraqi forces. Their aim was to sap Iraqi resources without causing the demise of the Iraqi state. However, this cardinal objective was not "imparted to our clients [the Kurds], who were encouraged to continue fighting."[38]

U.S. support for Mullah Mostafa was crucial from a psychological perspective. As he later confessed, he never trusted the Shah and could not count on his "goodwill" to continue to provide weapons and other types of support to the Iraqi Kurds. For Mullah Mostafa, U.S. participation would function as insurance against a sudden shift of policy by the Shah's government; he thought that the United States would not allow the Shah to suddenly drop his support for the Kurdish movement.[39] As subsequent events demonstrated, Mullah Mostafa gravely miscalculated the intentions of the United States and failed to comprehend the broader goals of Iranian foreign policy in the region.

Why didn't Mullah Mostafa pursue a more peaceful avenue to gain autonomy for Iraqi Kurdistan, as contained in the 1970 March Manifesto? Why did he mortgage the future of Kurdish autonomy to US, Israeli, and Iranian interests when it appeared that the Ba'thi government was going to give concessions to Kurdish demands? According to Iraqi accounts, his refusal to negotiate in good faith with Baghdad simply reflected his desire to prevent the return of normalcy to Kurdistan, which would have affected his leadership of the Kurdish movement and his domination of the KDP. Furthermore, Mullah Mostafa's intransigence was explained by the Iraqis in terms of "traps" set by the Israeli Mossad, the Shah's SAVAK, and the U.S. CIA to use the Kurds to prevent the development of a strong, independent, and economically thriving Iraq.[40] Although, as we have seen, there was an element of truth in the Ba'thi explanation of his "hawkish" posture toward Baghdad, a number of other factors contributed to the widening chasm between Mullah Mostafa and the Iraqi government.

After the announcement of the March Manifesto and before unilateral implementation by the government, two nearly successful assassination attempts were made against Mullah Mostafa. Although the government condemned both attempts, there was strong suspicion that Ba'thi elements were behind them.[41] In fact, the KDP's security elements submitted evidence that indicated the possibility of government involvement in these assassination attempts. A further cause of tension between Mullah Mostafa and the Ba'thi regime in the early 1970s was the deportation of fifty thousand Iraqi citizens of Iranian origin to Iran. It was not the first, nor the last, time that the Iraqi regime expelled thousands of its citizens and forced them into neighboring Iran. Many of these Iraqis had lived there for generations, and their Iranian ancestry had no significance for them. They neither spoke Persian nor had any affinity for

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Iranian culture or politics, and their Iraqization was thorough and complete. But the Ba'thi regime used them as scapegoats for the Shah's policies and its own failure. What distinguished the 1971-1972 deportation of these "Iranians" from other waves of deportations was that a large number of them had come from areas between Khaneqain and Amara, which had a sizable number of Shi'a Kurds. Mullah Mostafa interpreted the expulsion of these Kurds as yet another attempt by the Iraqi government to decimate the Kurdish population while promising them greater autonomy.[42]

A more serious source of conflict between the Ba'thi government and Mullah Mostafa was the sustained policy of Arabization that the government pursued during the so-called transition period of 1970-1974. As discussed in Chapter 3, Arabization took many forms, including large transfers of the Arab population to Kurdish regions and resettlement of Kurds in the southwestern desert regions of the country. Added to this was the government's refusal to include Kirkuk and its oil fields as part of the Kurdish autonomous region.

Considering everything, Mullah Mostafa's alliance of convenience with Iran, Israel, and the United States was a rational move on his part to maximize his gains and minimize his losses. From the Kurdish perspective, however, it was unfortunate that as he was becoming more alienated from the Ba'thists, the Shah was searching to lessen Iranian-Arab tensions and establish a modus vivendi with his Arab neighbors. The impending British withdrawal from the Gulf contributed to the lessening of tension and led to a series of confidence-building measures by both the Arabs and the Shah. Nevertheless, the Shah continued to view Ba'thi Iraq as a destabilizing threat to Gulf security. Egyptian-Iranian relations, however, showed signs of improvement. President Nasser, while maintaining that "Arabism" in the Gulf remained one of his administration's paramount concerns, expressed a desire to allow the littoral Arab states to emerge as the guardians of Arab interests in the region.[43]

In October 1968, the Shah tried to forge closer ties with the conservative Arab regimes of the Gulf by making a goodwill trip to Saudi Arabia. During his visit, the Shah reiterated the necessity of closer cooperation between Iran and the Arab world in order to prevent the spread of Arab radicalism and Soviet influence. This was followed by the Shah's January 1969 announcement in New Delhi that he would not forcefully reincorporate Bahrain into Iran, but would allow the wishes of the local population, which by now was overwhelmingly Arab, to prevail. In other words, the Shah renounced Iran's long-standing claims to the Persian Gulf shaikhdom of Bahrain, thus allaying Saudi Arabia's fear of Iranian expansionism and removing a major sore point between Iran and the Arab states, in general, and Gulf countries, in particular.[44] When the Ba'thi authorities launched a vitriolic criticism of Nasser's handling of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Tehran and Cairo ironically found themselves "on the same side in opposition to an Arab state."[45]

With the death of Gamal Abdul Nasser in 1970 and the coming to power of Anwar Sadat, closer links between Egypt and Iran were established. As Sadat's regime gradually moved away from its reliance on the Soviet Union and sought to adopt a pro-Western posture, a marked change occurred in Cairo's foreign policy regarding the Persian Gulf states. While Sadat sought to maintain Egypt's leading role in Arab politics, he nevertheless adopted a less activist posture toward pan-Arab causes and an increasingly accommodationist stance toward

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the pro-Western countries in the Persian Gulf, including Iran. As a consequence of shifts in Egypt's foreign policy and the Shah's wooing of Saudi Arabia, a Tehran-Cairo-Riyadh axis began to counter the Moscow-Baghdad-Damascus axis in the region.

As the Iranian-Egyptian links became stronger, Iraq found itself increasingly isolated. This isolation increased when the Shah succeeded in improving Iran's relations with Syria. By mid-1974, Saddam Hussein had grudgingly concluded that in order to break down Iraq's isolation and defeat the Kurdish uprising on the political front, he needed to reach an accommodation with the Shah's government. King Hussein of Jordan, who had maintained good relations with both the Shah and Saddam Hussein, played an important role in paving the way for an eventual Iranian-Iraqi rapprochement. During the 1974 Arab Summit in Rabat, King Hussein arranged a meeting between Iraqi representatives and an Iranian delegation that had traveled to Morocco to meet with the Iraqis [46] Other Arab intermediaries, such as the Algerians, continued to arrange intermittent meetings between the two sides throughout the remainder of 1974 and until March 1975.

The urgency of reaching an agreement with the Shah became more pronounced when the Soviet Union decided to curtail weapons shipments to Iraq in early 1975. As Saddam Hussein later acknowledged, by the time he had decided to make an agreement with the Shah, the Iraqi military possessed only three heavy missiles and very few artillery shells.[47] If the Shah and the United States wanted to destroy Iraq, they were in a position to do so by early 1975. It is not clear what prompted Moscow to withhold critically needed weapons from Iraq. The Soviets may have been disenchanted with the isolation of the Iraqi regime in the Arab world and were hoping to bring about changes in the Iraqi regime by withholding weaponry. More importantly, the Soviets did not want to damage their chances to improve relations with Iran, a country with which they had hoped to develop extensive economic links and a country that was more important to the Soviet geostrategic design in the Middle East than Iraq was.

The negotiations between Iraq and the Shah's government had disturbed the Kurds. Mullah Mostafa was well aware of the efforts of various Arab parties, such as Jordan, Algeria, and Egypt, to end the conflict between Ba'thi Iraq and monarchical Iran. In late February 1975, the KDP dispatched a high-level delegation to Cairo to express concerns about a possible deal between a weakened Iraq and Iran that would be detrimental to the Kurdish cause. The KDP delegation asked Sadat to use his influence to preserve Kurdish interests in the event of an Iranian-Iraqi rapprochement. President Sadat reportedly assured the Kurds that there were no negotiations between the two sides.[48] As it turned out, President Sadat did not want to derail the impending negotiations between Iran and Iraq by publicly admitting their existence to the Kurds.

Multilateral efforts to bring about a settlement of the Iran-Iraq crisis bore fruit in March 1975 when Algerian president Bournedienne arranged a historic meeting between the Shah and Saddam Hussein, vice-president of Iraq's Revolutionary Command Council and de facto power wielder in Iraq. This meeting, which took place during a summit meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in Algiers, resulted in the signing of the Algiers Agreement on March 6, 1975. Because Iraq's diplomatic and military positions vis-a-vis Iran had been weakened by the time the Algiers Agreement was signed, the best Iraq could hope for was a commitment by the Shah to terminate his support for the Kurdish uprising. In return, Iraq

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had to concede to a number of territorial adjustments, including acceptance of the Thalweg Line, or mid-channel of the Shatt al-Arab, as the boundary between the two countries. Since the Shatt al-Arab waterway was Iraq's only outlet to the Gulf, the Ba'thi regime had always insisted on total control of this river, claiming that Iraq's economic survival depended on complete sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab. Iran, on the other hand, had insisted that the waterway was crucial for its economic and navigational purposes, and that, according to the principles of international law governing a shared body of water like the Shatt al-Arab, the Thalweg Line was the boundary between the two countries.[49] Saddam Hussein's concession on this point was a bitter blow to the prestige of the Ba'thi regime.

The Algiers Agreement was augmented by the Protocol Concerning the Delimitation of the River Frontier Between Iran and Iraq and the Treaty of International Boundaries and Good Neighborliness, both of which were signed in Baghdad on June 13, 1975, by Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Ali Khalatbary, and his Iraqi counterpart, Sa'dun Hamadi.[50] In addition, the Algiers Agreement called for establishment of a joint Iranian-Iraqi commission to implement its provisions. All violations of the agreement were to be reported to this commission, which would then seek to resolve any conflict. Both countries also agreed to invite Algeria to all meetings of the Iranian-Iraqi commission.

Some analysts have argued that a major factor in Saddam Hussein's willingness to grant major concessions to Iran on territorial and boundary issues stemmed largely from the pressure placed on Iraq by other Arab countries to extricate itself from its debilitating crisis so that it could concentrate its energies against the common enemy—the state of Israel. In fact, Saddam Hussein claimed that the Algiers Agreement was signed for the higher good of the Arab people.[51] Arab pressure did play a role in bringing the two sides to the negotiating table, but Iraq's inability to defeat the Kurdish uprising and increasing Iranian military pressure were equally important, if not more important, in compelling Saddam Hussein to offer major concessions. In the end, there was "little doubt who in the Algiers Agreement made the most concessions. Whereas Saddam went out of his way to placate the Shah by acknowledging Iran's sovereignty over half of the Shatt-al-Arab, the Shah made no practical concessions unless non-interference in the domestic affairs of another sovereign state can be considered one. In the Algiers Agreement, Hussein 'bought' the inviolability of Iraq's frontier, a fundamental and self-evident attribute of statehood, by paying the high price of territorial concessions."[52]

If one analyzes the Algiers Agreement strictly according to the territorial concessions made by Baghdad, one would have to concur with this judgment. On the other hand, what mattered most for Saddam Hussein in 1975 was the survival of the Ba'thi regime and the settlement of the Kurdish problem on his terms. Looked at from this limited perspective, there is no question that without the Algiers Agreement, the Ba'thi regime would have suffered a coup de grace. Instead, the Kurdish cause and Mullah Mostafa's leadership suffered a major blow. Within hours of the issuance of the Algiers Agreement, Baghdad launched a major offensive against the demoralized Kurdish *peshmerga* and eliminated any noticeable Kurdish resistance within two weeks.[53] Thousands of Kurds took refuge in Iran following the announcement of the Algiers Agreement and Mullah Mostafa's orders to give up the fight. The Iraqi army was then free to carry out the government's policy of depopulating Kurdish villages and deporting their

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residents to the southwestern desert region of the country. In the words of Samir al-Khalil (Kanan Makiya):

> Families of Kurds were bundled up in army trucks and transported to large hastily improvised camps or to Arab villages west of the Euphrates where they were settled in small groups.... Troops placed the [Kurdish] villagers on trucks to be carried off at night in long caravans along sealed routes. Having reached their destinations families were supplied with a tent, and grouped in fives in so-called villages. Movement was prohibited except for official business. The men were assigned jobs at fixed pay.[54]

Of those Kurds who decided to return to their villages from their refuge in Iran and take advantage of the general amnesty offered by the Iraqi government, some 85 percent were rounded up and deported to the southwest desert.

The estimated number of Kurds affected by the Ba'thi policy of deportation in the aftermath of Mullah Mostafa's defeat has ranged from 50,000 to 350,000, depending on the source.[55] The Iraqi government obliquely acknowledged the population transfers by stating that the government's policy was to establish a ten-kilometer security belt along the Iranian border, and that villagers in the security belt had to be transferred elsewhere in the country.[56] On the political front, the impact of the Algiers Agreement was the fragmentation of the Kurdish front into competing movements and political parties, which led to the debilitation of Kurdish unity in Iraq.

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR AND THE KURDS

The Iranian Revolution of 1978-1979 brought about profound transformations in Iran's domestic and international politics. The new regime in Iran, which espoused pan-Islamic views, was perceived by Saddam Hussein's Iraq as a threat to its secularist ideology. Ayatollah Khomeini's triumphant return to Iran in February 1979 coincided with an upsurge of Shi'a political activism in Iraq. Numerous anti-Ba'thi demonstrations in the southern holy cities of Najaf and Karbala were reported in early 1979. Antiregime demonstrations had even spread to Saddam City (now called Sadr City), the poor Shi'a neighborhood in Baghdad. The genesis of these demonstrations was purely local as they were organized under the aegis of the Iraqi Shi'a opposition group *al-Da'wa* (The Call). However, there is no denying that Ayatollah Khomeini's message of Islamic revivalism had a profound impact on the new-found activism of the Iraqi Shi'as. Many demonstrators carried pictures of Khomeini, along with banners containing slogans such as "Yes to Islam, no to Aflaq [an original founder of Ba'thism] and Saddam."[57] Moreover, an eminent Shi'a scholar, and the spiritual guide of *al-Da'wa*, Ayatollah Mohammad Baqer al-Sadr, began to publicly support the goals of the Iranian Revolution and hoped that similar ideas would take root in Iraq.

Public and popular protests against Ba'thi secularism worried Iraqi authorities that the ideals of the Iranian Revolution would spill over to their country and incite the Shi'as, who

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constitute over 55 percent of Iraq's population, to overthrow Saddam Hussein's minority regime. In fact, Iraqi officials on numerous occasions expressed fear that the Shah's policies of "hegemonic expansionism" and "chauvinistic nationalism" toward Iraq were being replaced by Khomeini's exhortations to "export" the Islamic revolution to their country.[58] Indeed, high-ranking clerics in Iran had labeled Iraqi Ba'thi socialism as "atheistic" and anti-Islamic and intensified their moral and material support for the *al-Da'wa* movement.

Iraq's response to the Shi'a movement was swift and brutal. The regime wanted to put an abrupt end to the uprising before it grew and spread north to the Kurdish regions. With massive arrests and executions of Shi'a activists, the Ba'thi regime began to put pressure on Ayatollah Sadr to leave Najaf and desist from issuing *fatwas* (religious edicts) against the government. Instead, Sadr intensified his exhortations to the Iraqis to overthrow Saddam Hussein's government. On June 12, 1979, Ayatollah Sadr sent a message strongly condemning the government and asking the people to eschew pan-Arabism and Ba'thism as political creeds and follow the example of Iran's Islamic path. Shortly thereafter, Sadr issued *a fatwa* forbidding Iraqi Muslims from being members of the Ba'th Party. Sadr's edicts provoked major demonstrations throughout Iraq, including Kurdish regions where sympathy demonstrations were held for Shi'a victims of the government's repression. On July 6, Ayatollah Sadr recorded a message in which he referred to the rulers of Iraq as "bloody murderers" and "despots," and called upon all Iraqis to do their utmost to get rid of Saddam Hussein and his Ba'thi regime.[59]

In another powerful message, which may have been recorded in early 1980, Ayatollah Sadr stressed the importance of Sunni-Shi'a and Arab-Kurdish cooperation in a united effort to overthrow the Ba'thi regime, in a popular uprising, and rebuild a "noble, free Iraq, where Islamic justice will abound and human dignity will reign."[60] Determined to prevent an uprising, the Ba'thi authorities put Ayatollah Sadr under house arrest in Najaf and later brought him to Baghdad and executed him in April 1980. The Iraqi government portrayed the Shi'a demonstrations as examples of Iranian "interference" in Iraq's domestic affairs, and used them as justification for launching a full-scale invasion of Iran on September 22, 1980. Notwithstanding this claim, there is now good reason to believe that Saddam Hussein attacked Iran to establish Iraqi hegemony in the Gulf and to revive his irredentist ambitions in the oil-rich Iranian province of Khuzistan. As Fred Halliday noted, the Ba'thists were "quite happy to see Khomeini call for a revolt and carefully nurtured the conflict along the Iran-Iraq border so as to heighten tensions."[61]

Purported violations of the Algiers Agreement by Iran were also cited as justification for the Iraqi invasion of Iran. These alleged violations involved "Iranian interference in the domestic affairs of Iraq" and the supposed violation of Iraqi air and ground space by Iranian forces between April and September 1980.[62] The accuracy of Iraqi charges was never affirmed by independent sources. In fact, as Gary Sick noted, available evidence "suggests that Iraq conducted a systematic buildup of its military forces between April and September 1980 in preparation for a lightning offensive [against Iran]."[63] The subsequent invasion of Iran, which involved bombing targets throughout the country and capturing four thousand square miles of Iranian territory, was disproportionate to the alleged Iranian provocation. The Ba'thi government never alleged that Iran was intending to invade Iraq, nor did it claim that Iran was

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massing forces along its border regions with Iraq. The "total absence of any Iranian military preparation was unmistakably obvious in the first few weeks of the war."[64]

Preceding the Iraqi invasion of Iran, both sides routinely charged each other with border violations. According to one study, between April 11 and September 11, 1980, Iraq announced 352 alleged Iranian attacks across the border, while Iran accused Iraq of 172 military incursions inside its territory.[65] Such incidents had been common along the Iran-Iraq border regions even before the advent of the Islamic Republic in Iran, and certainly had never been considered as a casus belli. On September 17, 1980, Saddam Hussein gave a clear signal of what was to come in five days by denouncing the Algiers Agreement which he had negotiated with the Shah, and tearing up a copy of it on television. Saddam Hussein then stated that Iraq had made the decision to recover its territory by force, and to bring the Shatt al-Arab waterway under total Iraqi control and sovereignty.[66] In a special session of the Iraqi National Assembly, Saddam Hussein interjected a Kurdish dimension to his justification for abrogating the Algiers Agreement by stating that the Islamic Republic, like the Shah's regime before it, had embarked upon a policy of supporting Kurdish "mutiny" inside Iraq.[67]

Contrary to Saddam Hussein's assertion, it seems unlikely that the Islamic Republic had the necessary resources or the organizational support to continue the Shah's Kurdish policy toward Iraq, especially in view of the fact that the Islamic Republic was already in the throes of combat with its own Kurds. In fact, Iraq had turned the tables and was fomenting a Kurdish revolt inside Iran. According to Eric Rouleau, a correspondent for the influential Paris daily, *Le Monde,* who interviewed the KDPI's Ghassemlou, Iraq was a major source of foreign assistance to the KDPI. In his book, My *Turn to Speak,* exiled Iranian president Bani-Sadr referred to documents captured from the Kurds that implicated Iraq as being heavily involved in all facets of Kurdish turmoil in Iran after the victory of the Iranian Revolution.[68]

Although it is difficult to ascertain the extent of Iranian and Iraqi involvement in inciting Kurdish uprisings in each other's country before the onset of the Iran-Iraq War, after the war started both sides took specific measures to involve their Kurdish populations in the war effort. Iraq was the first to play its Kurdish card as a strategic tool to weaken Iran. Infighting among various Kurdish groups also made it easier for Baghdad to use its Kurdish card. For example, Talabani's PUK was fighting the KDP-Provisional Leadership led by the Barzani brothers. Ghassemlou's KDPI "hated Barzani's Iraqi KDP because it had accepted arms from the Shah."[69] In general, the effectiveness of the Kurdish resistance against Iraq was weakened by the absence of a unified Kurdish front in the first two years of the Iran-Iraq War.

In January 1981, the first effective Iraqi attempt to play its Kurdish card occurred when the Ba'thi government established a supply route to *peshmerga* of Ghassemlou's KDPI near the cities of Qasr-e Shirin and Nowdesheh. The control of Nowdesheh was Iraq's prime objective, as the city's strategic location would deny Iran the use of the Baghdad-Tehran highway. The Iraqis were successful in overwhelming the relatively small and lightly armed *pasdaran* and regular Iranian military units stationed in the area. With Baghdad's assistance, the KDPI established a major operational headquarters in Nowdesheh and launched a three-month guerrilla offensive against Iranian forces with some success.[70]

Beginning in April 1981, the KDPI—aided by Talabani's PUK, Iranian opposition guerrilla

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groups *Mujahidin-e Khlaq* and *Fadaiyan-e Khalq*, and Iraqi weapons and ammunition—forced the *pasdaran* units to retreat from major cities in Iranian Kurdistan, including Sanandaj, the capital of Kurdistan and an important military outpost. The KDPI and its supporters then contemplated a frontal attack on the city of Mahabad and the establishment of a "liberated Kurdish zone" in the same fashion as the Kurds who set up the ill-fated Kurdish Republic of Mahabad forty-five years earlier.

Iranian forces succeeded in regrouping and launched a series of counter-offensives against the KDPI. Moreover, by April 1982, an Iranian offensive in the north had inflicted heavy casualties on Iraqi forces, forcing them to retreat from Iranian territory. Consequently, the fortunes of the KDPI changed in May 1982 when Iranian ground forces under the command of Colonel Sayyad Shirazi launched a series of highly successful attacks against the KDPI's forces and bases. Colonel Shirazi's strategy was simple, yet effective. He coaxed Ghassemlou's forces into spreading themselves too thin, then encircled the overstretched forces and dealt them a devastating blow from which they never recovered. Ghassemlou's hopes of creating a "liberated Kurdish zone" all but vanished, and the KDPI was reduced to a marginal Iraqi instrument in the Iran-Iraq War.[71] In order to salvage his floundering fortunes, Ghassemlou contacted former Iranian president Bani-Sadr and invited him to join him in setting up a parallel government and unseating the ruling clerics in Tehran. Ghassemlou reassured Bani-Sadr that the goal of his movement was "autonomy for Kurdistan, democracy for Iran." Fearing that Ghassemlou was harboring separatist motives, Bani-Sadr refused to accept his invitation.

After bringing its own Kurdish uprising under control and expelling Iraqi forces from Iranian Kurdistan, the Islamic Republic began to play its own Kurdish card. On balance, the Iranians were more successful than the Iraqis in exploiting their Kurdish assets during the Iran-Iraq War. Not only had the Islamic Republic acquired the support of Massoud and Idris Barzani's KDP by 1983, it had also succeeded in attracting the support of one-time Marxist-Leninist Jalal Talabani's PUK in a united Kurdish front against the Iraqi regime. Surprisingly, by 1987 Talabani was echoing Tehran's call for the overthrow of the Ba'thi regime in Baghdad and its replacement with an Islamic republic.[72]

As the Iraqi regime began to fear the prospect of a potentially destabilizing Iranian-Kurdish front in the north, Saddam Hussein reportedly sought to open secret negotiations with the Kurds.[73] While seeking to reach a modus vivendi with its Kurdish groups, however, Iraq came under heavy pressure from Ankara to clamp down on Kurdish activities along the border regions with Turkey. Turkey claimed that the border areas under the control of Massoud and Idris Barzani's KDP were being used as staging grounds for anti-Turkish Kurdish incursions. Furthermore, the Turkish government was blaming Iraqi Kurds for major disturbances that were taking place throughout southeastern Turkey. In the period 1981-1982, eighty thousand Kurds were reportedly arrested in Turkey, and two thousand more were detained in 1983.[74] Because Iraqi oil was transported through a pipeline that connected the Kirkuk oil fields to the Turkish Mediterranean coast, the Ba'thi government could ill afford to alienate Turkey and jeopardize its own lifeline. Consequently, the Iraqis succumbed to Turkish pressure and, in April 1983, signed an agreement on joint security measures allowing Turkish troops to enter Iraqi territory in "hot pursuit" of Kurdish guerrillas.

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In May 1983, Kurdish guerrillas operating from Iraqi bases crossed into Turkey and killed several Turkish soldiers. The Turks invoked their April hot pursuit agreement, and thousands of their troops entered Iraqi Kurdistan in a search-and-destroy mission that resulted in the capture of hundreds of Kurdish *peshmerga* and their leaders. Many of the captured Kurds were handed over to Baghdad, where they were executed or received lengthy prison sentences.[75] By the summer of 1983, a combined Iraqi-Turkish war against the Kurds had begun. The Kurds, particularly the Barzanis' KDP, needed to form an alliance with Iran to counteract this new threat.

In July 1983, Iran launched a new offensive against Iraqi forces under the code name *Wal Fajr-2*. This marked the first time that Iraqi Kurds and Iranian troops had coordinated their military activities during the Iran-Iraq War. As a result of *Wal Fajr-2* operations, the Barzanis' KDP, in cooperation with Iranian forces, recaptured Haj Omran. The recapture of Haj Omran and its environs had both strategic and psychological significance. It was an area where Ghassemlou's KDPI had set up a major operational base, and had been used by Iraqi forces as a supply route through which assistance to the KDPI and their own forces was funneled. Haj Omran was also a mountain stronghold of Mullah Mostafa Barzani prior to the signing of the Algiers Agreement. The recapture of Haj Omran was a "poignant reassertion by Barzani's sons of the family's decades-long struggle against a central government in Iraq."[76] Throughout the summer, Iranian forces continued to outmaneuver the Iraqis along the Kurdish border regions. On September 16, a division of the Iranian army assisted by KDP *peshmerga*, whom the Iranian government described as a group of Iraqi Muslim combatants, penetrated deep inside Iraqi Kurdistan and captured large quantities of weapons and equipment, which they gave to the anti-Iraqi Kurds. Three days later, Iraq retaliated by bombing the cities of Baneh and Marivan in Iranian Kurdistan.

Iran launched *Wal Fajr-4* on October 19, 1983, against Iraqi targets throughout the northern front. The immediate objectives of *Wal Fajr-4* were to push Iraqi troops far enough back so the Iranian cities of Marivan and Baneh would be out of Iraqi shelling range, to gain control of the strategic heights in the Penjwin valley, and to force the remnants of the KDPI out of their bases. The supporting group in *Wal Fajr-4* included not only the KDP *peshmerga*, but also Shi'a elements from the south and other anti-Saddam groups. The success of *Wal Fajr-4* was not only a cause of concern for the Iraqi regime, but also for Jalal Talabani, whose PUK was being outmaneuvered by its adversary, the KDP.

In order to reverse their fortunes, Saddam Hussein and Jalal Talabani began to negotiate in November 1983. By early December, the PUK had apparently reached an understanding with the Ba'thi government, and a cease-fire was declared. The immediate benefit of this cease-fire was that the Iraqis could concentrate on fighting the Iranian-KDP elements in the north and the PUK could count on Iraqi support in its struggle against its adversaries.[77] As part of an overall agreement on the resolution of the Kurdish problem that was to follow, Talabani demanded the extension of the Kurdish autonomous region to include parts of Kirkuk, the allocation of 20 to 30 percent of Kirkuk oil revenues for the economic development of Kurdistan, a halt to Arabization and deportation of Kurds, the formation of a forty-thousand-man Kurdish defense force, and release of all "political and military prisoners" by both sides.[78] Baghdad was

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apparently willing to meet most of these demands. Even on the thorny issue of the status of Kirkuk, a compromise was reportedly made whereby a joint Arab-Kurdish-Turkmen administration would govern the city of Kirkuk, including the oil fields, while the rest of the Kirkuk province would become part of the Kurdish autonomous region.[79] The Iraq-PUK agreement was never publicly reported, as obstacles began to develop before implementation.

In March 1984, Iraq arrested twenty-four Kurds and charged them with desertion and draft dodging. They were subsequently executed, despite the PUK's intervention on their behalf. At the same time, government forces clashed with Kurdish students at Irbil University, where an unspecified number of students were killed by Iraqi soldiers. Concurrently, the Talabani-Saddam Hussein relations became tense when progovernment troops killed Talabani's brother and his two daughters. More important, the demise of the agreement between the PUK and the Iraqi government was attributed to Turkish pressure put on Saddam Hussein not to grant any significant concessions to the Kurds. In mid-October 1984, a Turkish delegation led by Foreign Minister Vahit Helefoglu visited Iraq. According to the PUK, Helefoglu warned Iraq that Turkey would shut down the vital Kirkuk oil line, hence paralyzing Iraq economically, if Baghdad granted major concessions to the Kurds. Obviously, Turkey was worried about the spill-over effects that concessions would have on its own restive Kurdish population.[80] On October 18, Talabani terminated negotiations with Iraqi authorities, and the brief political honeymoon between the two sides came to an abrupt end. In the same month, another Iraqi-Turkish security agreement was signed, allowing each side to go beyond the hot pursuit provisions of the earlier agreement. Both countries could now penetrate each other's territory in pursuit of Kurdish *peshmerga* and remain there for up to three days to accomplish their mission.[81]

Between late 1984 and the beginning of 1986, the Iran-Iraq War entered a relatively quiet phase in which both sides launched only limited ground offensives. However, Iranian support for the KDP during this period allowed the KDP to increase the number of raids against Iraqi and PUK targets. On September 8, 1985, Iran and its Kurdish allies launched an attack against Iraqi forces and captured over 240 square kilometers of territory in Iraqi Kurdistan. Although the new territory, which was located west of the Iranian city of Piranshahr, had little strategic value for the conduct of the war, it clearly showed that Iran "now dominated the battle for the Kurds and could exploit its alliances to achieve limited gains of Iraqi territory."[82]

As the Kurdish cards stacked up higher against Saddam Hussein, Turkey increased its cross-border raids into Iraq. Turkey also threatened to cut off trade with Iran if Tehran continued aiding anti-Iraq Kurdish groups. After a rapprochement between Talabani's PUK and Iran, Turkish fears of Iraqi dis-integration reached a new plateau. The right-wing Turkish press even speculated about an alleged Iranian objective of seizing Kirkuk and its oilfields.[83] Some Turks also speculated that the United States was encouraging Turkey to capture Kirkuk before Iraq was dismembered as a means to deny Iran a decisive victory in its war with Iraq.[84] Speculations aside, the Turkish government did make a concerted effort to warn Iran that its support of Kurdish groups would have adverse consequences.

Turkish foreign minister Vahit Helefoglu stressed the importance of Kurdish issues to visiting high-level Iranian foreign ministry officials in October 1986. He told the Iranian

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delegation that Turkey would like to stay neutral in the Iran-Iraq War. At the same time, Helefoglu stated that his country wanted the Kirkuk-Iskenderun oil pipeline to remain immune from either direct Iranian attacks or those conducted by Iranian-supported Kurds. Although the Iranian deputy foreign minister indicated his appreciation of the importance of the pipeline for the Turkish economy, he nevertheless stated: "We are at war with Iraq and we cannot give assurances to any country."[85] Although Iran did not attack the pipeline during the course of the Iran-Iraq War, the issue remained a point of contention between Ankara and Tehran.

In late 1986, the Turkish air force bombed a number of Kurdish villages in northern Iraq on the pretext of destroying PKK camps. The Iranian government filed a bitter protest with Turkish authorities over the bombings of the Iraqi Kurds, which were particularly ill-timed from the Iranian perspective as the Islamic Republic was preparing to launch another offensive, in cooperation with the Iraqi Kurds, through Haj Omran against the enemy's northern forces.[86] In response to the rising tensions between Iran and Turkey over the Kurdish issue, and to alleviate fears of Iranian territorial ambitions in Iraq, the Islamic Republic in December 1986 organized a gathering in Tehran called the Conference on the Cooperation of the Iraqi People. This conference brought together representatives of anti-Saddam Hussein elements, including Kurds. While the then President Ali Khamenei reaffirmed Iran's commitment to the territorial integrity of Iraq, he stated that Iran would not hesitate to challenge another country's intervention in Iraqi affairs. In the same vein, Prime Minister Hussein Mussavi warned other countries not to take advantage of Iraq's weakness to revive old territorial claims against that country.[87] Although Turkey was never named in these warnings, it was clear that Iranian authorities were addressing Turkish officials and their lingering claims for Mosul and Kirkuk.

In early 1987, Iran launched a two-pronged offensive against Iraq. On January 9, Iran launched a major offensive against Basra in the south in an operation code-named *Karbala-5*. *A* few days later, Iranian forces attacked in the north in *Karbala-6*. These two operations were designed to force Iraq to defend itself simultaneously on two fronts. *Karbala-6*, however, seemed to have been launched as a diversionary tactic, with *Karbala-5* the main thrust of Iran's offensive. In *Karbala-6*, Iranian forces did not seek to penetrate Iraqi defensive lines.[88] They simply seized hills overlooking Iraqi positions and allowed their Kurdish allies to occupy them before they withdrew.

On February 12, 1987, Iran carried out a two-day offensive near Haj Omran and claimed that it was aiming toward Irbil. The nature of the attack and its brief duration indicated that it was a diversionary move on the part of Iran. Shortly thereafter, however, Iran carried out another major offensive in the north, *Karbala-7*. This offensive, which was launched on March 4, 1987, took place near Gerdmand Heights, located within the vicinity of Haj Omran and east of the Iraqi Kurdish town of Rowandiz. *Karbala-7* operations included Iranian regular army units and *pasdaran*, as well as a combined Kurdish force that now included *peshmerga* from both the KDP and PUK. Within twenty-four hours of the commencement of *Karbala-7*, the combined Iranian-Kurdish units had captured the Gerdmand Heights and seized other positions above the Iraqi Kurdish town of Shoma Mostafa.[89] Despite these gains, Iraqi forces were in no danger of being overrun in major cities in the north, such as Kirkuk, and their oil pipelines and major highways in the north were heavily defended against Kurdish or Iranian attacks.

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Furthermore, the Iraqi government's "ruthlessness and considerable tenacity," along with Turkish-Iraqi collaboration, had thwarted Kurdish actions in major Kurdish areas in Iraq.[90] Nonetheless, Iranian officials insisted in May that anti-Iraqi Kurds were indeed conducting successful sabotage operations against military and economic targets deep inside Iraqi Kurdistan, and that joint Iranian-Kurdish attacks against Iraqi forces had succeeded in demoralizing Saddam Hussein's forces in Kurdistan.[91]

The apparent success of Iranian-Kurdish cooperation compelled Saddam Hussein to order the destruction of hundreds of "hostile" Kurdish villages. The destruction of these villages continued throughout 1988 and into 1989, even after a cease-fire had been arranged in the Iran-Iraq War. The Iraqi Kurds have claimed that much of the destruction was done through a combination of chemical weapons and simple bulldozing techniques.[92] By July 1987, the Iraqis had committed over thirty-five thousand combat troops to the "pacification" of Kurdish villages, causing the ranks of the *peshmerga* to increase to nearly ten thousand fighters.[93] This was an indication of the seriousness with which Iraq viewed the Kurdish threat in the north. As fighting continued on the northern front, Iraqi forces accelerated the depopulation of Kurdish villages and escalated the bombing of villages. These policies redounded to the detriment of the Iraqi objective of the "pacification" of Kurdistan; they created "at least two new guerrillas for every one that was killed or imprisoned. For the first time, the KDP and similar groups began to threaten control of the countryside and to give Iran's slow advances in the north strategic meaning."[94]

In March 1988, a new Iranian-Kurdish offensive was launched on the northern front. By this time, the United States had tilted heavily toward the Iraqis by reflagging Kuwaiti oil tankers and confronting the Islamic Republic in the Gulf. Furthermore, the West and its Arab allies in the Gulf had concluded that an Iranian victory had to be averted at all costs, and they increased their financial, political, and military assistance to Saddam Hussein's regime. By attracting direct and indirect U.S. support, Saddam Hussein managed to internationalize the war, thus making it costlier for Iran and its Kurdish allies to pursue the conflict. Although U.S. support for Saddam Hussein began to show positive results on the southern front, and enabled the Iraqis to gradually reverse battlefield setbacks in the southern marshes and adjacent regions of Iraq, Saddam Hussein's forces could not score any noticeable victories on the northern front.

Tactical mistakes in the Kurdish areas were instrumental in preventing Saddam's forces from exploiting their advantage in manpower and weaponry against the Iranian-Kurdish forces. As Anthony Cordesman and Abraham Wagner observed:

> [Iraqi] units withdrew from many of the heights and ridges in the area but then deployed forward to defend the towns at the border. Giving up the rough mountain terrain allowed the Iraqi forces to be outflanked, and several towns could not be held without defending the surrounding heights... . Iraqi forces had further problems in dealing with Kurdish infiltration behind their lines of communication and, according to some reports, Iran even managed to use its speed boats to move its troops through part of the reservoir.[95]

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As a result of tactical mistakes in the north, up to four thousand soldiers from Iraq's Forty-third Division were killed, and the country lost large amounts of light weapons, munitions, artillery pieces, armored vehicles, and tanks. However, Iran could not turn its victories in the Kurdish north into victories in the south, which had become the main battlefield of the Iran-Iraq War. By using its best troops in the north, Iran could not muster enough forces to defend its southern flank against increasingly emboldened Iraqi counterattacks.

By June 1988, Iranian fortunes in the south were deteriorating rapidly, and Iranian forces were abandoning captured Iraqi territory. Reports in the Iranian media portrayed these defeats as tactical battlefield retreats, but it was clear to most people, including the country's leadership, that Iran could not achieve a victory against the militarily superior Iraqi forces and their U.S. and Arab allies.[96] To make matters worse for Tehran, the Iraqis had resorted to the widespread use of chemical weapons against Iranian targets. It was within this context that Iran formally announced its acceptance of U.N. Security Council Resolution 598 on July 18, 1988, leading to a cease-fire between the two belligerents.

Shortly after the announcement of Iran's acceptance of the U.N. resolution, Baghdad launched a major operation throughout Iraqi Kurdistan. Initially, fifteen thousand troops were deployed for this operation, but by mid-August 1988, their numbers had reached sixty thousand.[97] A few days after the cease-fire went into effect on August 20, Saddam Hussein ordered a "clean up" operation against Kurdish villages that had opposed his government during the war. The Iraqi army occupied all major roads linking Kurdish villages to each other and to the outside, and on August 25, the Iraqi air force launched air attacks using conventional and chemical weapons against Kurdish villages.[98] The severity of these attacks was such that between August 25 and September 1, more than fifty thousand Kurdish refugees fled to Turkey from their villages in Iraq.[99]

A group of health care professionals was sent to Turkish Kurdistan by the Massachusetts-based Physicians for Human Rights to examine the condition of Iraqi Kurdish refugees, and to investigate the use of chemical and poison gas against the Kurds. The following general conclusions were published in their report on February 1989:

1. *Iraqi aircraft attacked Kurdish villages in northern Iraq with bombs containing lethal poison gas on August 25, 1988.* This conclusion is based on responses to a systematically administered questionnaire, videotaped eyewitness accounts, and findings on physical examination of those residing in refugee camps in southeastern Turkey at the time of the mission.
2. *Poison gas bombs killed humans and animals nearby, and caused severe suffering among survivors.* Refugees consistently reported that attacks were carried out by low-flying jets early in the morning of August 25, 1988. Bombing runs were followed by the appearance of yellowish clouds at the site of bomb bursts... . No survivor reported being closer than 50 meters to a bomb blast.
3. *Survivors told consistent stories about the August 25 attacks, even when residing in separate camps with no opportunity to communicate.* Statistical analysis of responses to the questionnaire demonstrated that refugees originating from the same village gave mutually consistent answers regarding the time of the attack, weather conditions,

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number of attacking jets, and number of casualties in their village.

4. *Survivors showed medical findings consistent with exposure to poison gas.* We examined a middle-aged man who was a casualty of poison gas attacks. He had several extensive lesions on his back and flank, consistent with chemical burns by a blistering poison gas such as mustard gas (yperite). . . . Two children were also casualties, but had a different pattern of injury. . . . More than a dozen other refugees showed U.S. skin lesions that had almost completely healed. Their pattern of distribution on face, hands, neck and other exposed skin surfaces was consistent with patients' histories of exposure to blistering chemical agents.
5. *Eyewitness accounts, the pattern of symptoms reported, and physical evidence obtained by others point to the use of lethal poison gases including, but not restricted to, sulfur mustard (yperite)...* . The pattern of injury and time-course of symptoms are consistent with observations on [Iranian] victims of Iraqi chemical weapons made by U.N. investigatory teams from 1984 through 1988. . . . Eyewitness accounts of deaths beginning within minutes of exposure, however, cannot be explained by mustard gas alone. The sum of the evidence is most consistent with use of at least one agent in addition to sulfur mustard.[100]

These conclusions were corroborated by independent human rights sources and Western journalists who visited the Kurdish regions and interviewed victims of Iraqi attacks.[101]

The poison gas attacks in August 1988 were not the first time the Ba'thi government had used chemical weapons against its adversaries. During the Iran-Iraq War, Baghdad routinely used such weapons against Iranian targets, and later admitted to using chemical weapons against Iranians. The human rights organization Middle East Watch, quoting one expert, suggested that Iraq may have even resorted to the small-scale use of poison gas against the Kurds at the height of Mullah Mostafa's rebellion in 1974-1975.[102] However, the first major Iraqi chemical attack against Kurdish civilians that received worldwide attention occurred in March 1988. On March 16 and 17, Iraqi forces, using a combination of mustard gas and other internationally outlawed chemicals, attacked the Iraqi Kurdish city of Halabja, killing five thousand inhabitants.[103] The indiscriminate use of chemical weapons by the Ba'thi regime was not only a clear violation of the Geneva Protocol of 1925, which bans the use of poison gas in war, it was also a war crime against defenseless Kurdish civilians, the magnitude of which was initially suppressed by Iraq's denial of Kurdish massacre.[104]

During the Iran-Iraq War, the city of Halabja was a center for anti-Saddam Hussein Kurdish movements, and it was the scene of several Iranian-Kurdish victories against Iraqi forces. Thus, the people of Halabja were apparently chosen to be made an example of what happened to those who sided with Iran. Rather than confronting Iranian-Kurdish forces with conventional weapons, Iraq apparently decided to use poison gas as a terror weapon to force the Kurds to desist from challenging Ba'thi forces in the north. Once the news of massive civilian casualties at Halabja reached the outside world, some reports speculated that the civilian population was caught in the middle of a major battle and victimized by poison gas used by both Iraq and Iran. The United States, among others, refrained from criticizing Iraq, partly because of the

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confusion surrounding the events at Halabja. However, testimonies of survivors of the attack clarified that the battle for Halabja had already been won by Iranian forces and their Kurdish allies, and the city was in the control of anti-Iraqi elements when chemical weapons were dropped.

Although the international community remained surprisingly silent about the massacre at Halabja, Iran protested vigorously to the United Nations and demanded that the U.N. secretary general send an investigating team to the area. U.N. investigators, led by Dr. Manuel Dominguez, traveled to Iran and Iraq and examined survivors of the gas attack. In Iran, the patients Dr. Dominguez examined were "for the most part civilians who were listed as having been gassed at Halabja on dates between March 16 and 18 . . . [while the Iraqis] produced no victims or evidence to sustain allegations that the gas attack at Halabja in mid-March was the work of Iran."[105]

Iraq's use of chemical weapons against its Kurdish population caused a flood of Kurdish refugees. By October 1988, sixty thousand Kurds had fled to Turkey. Of these, seventeen thousand requested voluntary transfers to Iran, where they could join Massoud Barzani's KDP.[106] Some Kurdish leaders lobbied the United States to intercede on behalf of the Kurds. The PUK's secretary general, Jalal Talabani, arrived in Washington in June 1988 and held talks with middle-ranking State Department officials. As a protest, Iraq canceled a scheduled meeting between Secretary of State George Shultz and his Iraqi counterpart, Tariq Aziz. Baghdad viewed the cancellation of the Shultz-Aziz meeting as only a minor setback to Iraqi-US relations because, at the time, the United States was trying to bolster its alliance with Baghdad and to downplay the importance of Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons against the Kurdish uprising.[107] Iraq's relations with the United States suffered another setback, however, in November 1988 when the Iraqi government ordered Haywood Rankin, head of the Political Section of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, to leave the country. Ba'thi authorities were incensed that Rankin had taken an unauthorized trip to the Kurdish region in the north.[108] The Iraqi government remained apprehensive about any outside contact with the Kurds.

During the summer of 1988, U.S. legislators were showing signs of uneasiness over U.S.-Iraqi relations as mounting evidence of the use of poison gas against the Kurds was putting the Ba'thi regime on the defensive. In September, when the U.S. Senate voted to impose economic sanctions against Iraq in retaliation for using chemical weapons, Ba'thi authorities strongly protested to the United States for what they viewed as unwarranted and unjustified interference in Iraq's domestic affairs generated by "baseless rumors" and "unsubstantiated" evidence. Kuwait, a close ally of Saddam Hussein at the time, came to Iraq's defense by accusing the foreign media of "fabricating" the poison gas attacks against the Kurds in order to derail the growing friendship between the United States and the Gulf's dominant Arab state.[109] According to Iraqi sources, tens of thousands of Iraqis marched past the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad denouncing the Senate's vote. Saddam Hussein issued a statement charging that the real purpose of the anti-Iraq vote was to divert world attention from the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories in Israel.[110]

In October 1988, the U.S. Senate took a tougher line when it voted to impose both economic and military sanctions against Iraq. The Senate's proposal called for a ban on the shipment of

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arms, military support equipment, and military-related technology to Iraq; and it called for U.S. vetoes of loans from international lending agencies to Baghdad. The bill also called for the severance of diplomatic relations with Iraq if the government did not stop its chemical attacks on Kurdish targets. By late 1988, it seemed that Iraqi-US relations were reaching a breaking point over Iraq's use of chemical weapons. However, in November the Reagan administration intervened to smooth Iraqi-U.S. relations by approving over $1 billion in credit guarantees to Baghdad for the purchase of agricultural commodities from the United States.

Throughout the second half of 1988 and the first half of 1989, Iraq focused on deflecting international condemnation of its use of poison gas against the Kurds, while announcing a major amnesty program for Kurds wishing to return from refugee camps in Turkey and Iran. The Ba'thi regime continued to deny that it had used chemical weapons against the Kurds. At times, Turkey issued supportive statements denying Iraq's use of chemical weapons. Ankara was concerned mostly with repatriating Iraqi Kurdish refugees and did not want any more. Furthermore, Turkey did not want to jeopardize its lucrative trade arrangements with Iraq, nor did it want to give Baghdad any excuse to renege on its $2 billion debt to Ankara. Therefore, it seemed that Turkey's corroboration of Iraqi denials had less to do with real evidence and more to do with commercial considerations.[111] It also appeared that the Turkish government had reached a tacit understanding with Saddam Hussein to deny the U.N. teams full access to refugee camps in southeastern Turkey to interview victims of poison gas attacks.

In early September 1988, officials representing the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross visited Iraqi Kurdish refugees in shelters in the Iranian province of West Azerbaijan. They stated that despite the refugees' reports of Iraqi use of chemical weapons, the members of the team did not see evidence of this. At the same time, a two-person UNHCR team toured Kurdish refugee camps in southeastern Turkey. This group said that they had not received reports from Turkish medical authorities, nor had they seen evidence, to substantiate the refugees' claim of Iraqi use of chemical weapons against the Kurds. Based on these reports, the Turkish Foreign Ministry announced on September 14 that it would not allow any more U.N. experts into Turkey for the purpose of determining if Iraq had used chemical weapons against the Kurds.[112]

Many eyewitness accounts and investigations by independent human rights organizations and medical teams, however, had already uncovered evidence of Iraqi use of chemical weapons. On September 8, 1988, Amnesty International, in a strong appeal to the U.N. Security Council, condemned the continuing systematic attacks on Kurdish villages by Iraqi troops "using overwhelming force, including chemical weapons. . . . The mass killings are part of a systematic and deliberate policy by the Iraqi government to eliminate large numbers of Kurds."[113] Amnesty International later issued a detailed report on the victimization of children and documented a number of incidents of deliberate killings of children in the Iraqi attacks on Kurdish towns and villages.[114]

Unfazed by condemnation of its Kurdish policy, the Ba'thi government launched a public relations campaign to woo Kurdish refugees back to Iraq. In early September 1988, President Saddam Hussein issued a general amnesty to the Kurds, and by the end of the month, Iraqi authorities claimed that more than sixty-one thousand Kurdish refugees had returned home and

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were being provided for by the Iraqi government. One month later, with much fanfare, the government announced that a new town of Halabja would be built in Sulaymanieh governorate, and the government would allocate plots of land to as many people from the now-destroyed Halabja as possible.[115]

Despite the Iraqi government's optimistic estimations, the number of Kurdish refugees returning to Iraq remained low. As a result, Saddam Hussein announced on March 2, 1989, a second amnesty for all Kurds, except for the leadership of the Kurdish resistance movement and "agents of Iran." The Kurds were given until the end of April to take advantage of this second amnesty offer or forfeit their right of return.[116] However, the amnesty offer was undermined in April with the initiation of a sustained program of depopulating Kurdish villages along the Iranian and Turkish borders in order to establish a 30-kilometer buffer zone. This was justified as necessary to enhance Iraq's national security.[117] The establishment of the buffer zone and the population transfers helped convince Kurdish refugees not to return from Turkey and Iran. Thus, Saddam Hussein issued a third amnesty offer in March 1990. This time, he extended his amnesty offer to all Iraqi Kurds, including leaders of the opposition guerrilla groups supported by Iran.[118] The Kurds still remained wary of accepting Saddam's overture.

The September 1989 parliamentary elections in the Kurdish autonomous region were billed by the Ba'thi authorities as the dawn of a new era in Iraqi-Kurdish relations, and the government called upon its Kurdish population to turn out in full force. The government later announced that the elections were evidence of the success of its Kurdish policies; it reported almost 100 percent participation by the people of the three Kurdish provinces of Sulaymanieh, Irbil, and Dahuk. The elections resulted in the Bath Party winning thirty seats in the fifty-member legislative council for the autonomous region. The other seats were won either by independent candidates or members of progovernment Kurdish parties.[119] Neither Jalal Talabani's PUK nor Massoud Barzani's KDP contested the elections.

Perhaps no single exogenous factor was more important in boosting Saddam Hussein's confidence in dealing with his domestic agenda, including the Kurdish problem, than Iraq's developing relations with the United States in the 1980s. The Reagan administration's concern with preventing the "export" of Iran's Islamic revolution was no doubt a principal variable in developing the "mindset" in Washington, as the relationship became known among policymakers in the United States.[120] The beginning of the so-called honeymoon between Washington and Baghdad dated back to late 1981 and early 1982 when Saddam Hussein's invading army was chased back into Iraqi territory by Iranian forces. As his military position began to deteriorate, Saddam Hussein sent feelers to the United States, hoping to improve relations and gain U.S. support for his war against the Islamic Republic.

The United States, still indignant at the "loss" of Iran, and hounded by the memory of the Iran hostage crisis of 1979–1980, was eager to help Iraq. The Reagan administration's ploy to "demonize" Iran and portray it as a "crazed wasteland of fanatics and their victims, a country governed by madmen and peopled by their unquestioning followers,"[121] justified their new-found friendship for the Ba'thi government in Iraq. Apparently, the Reagan administration was cognizant of the potential pitfalls in forging an anti-Iran alliance with Baghdad. According to Geoffrey Kemp, the top Middle East expert in President Reagan's National Security Council:

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"It wasn't that we wanted Iraq to win the war, we did not want Iraq to lose. We really weren't naive. We knew he [Saddam Hussein] was an S.O.B., but he was our S.O.B."[122]

The first concrete sign of Washington's tilt toward Baghdad came in March 1982 when the State Department removed Iraq from the list of countries supporting "international terrorism." As Noel Koch, the Defense Department's top counterterrorism official, divulged, the United States still considered Iraq a prime sponsor of terrorism. However, the Reagan administration wanted to help Saddam Hussein's regime succeed in the Iran-Iraq War, thus removing Iraq from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism was viewed within the broader context of Reagan's Gulf policy. This move allowed the United States to extend $2 billion in credits to Iraq, including $300 million for the purchase of U.S. rice and wheat, thereby alleviating the severe economic strains under which the Iraqi regime was operating.[123] Despite the growing coincidence of interest between Washington and Baghdad, the two sides still had not reestablished diplomatic relations, which were severed after the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War.

Formal diplomatic relations between the United States and Iraq were restored on November 26, 1984. Iraqi foreign minister Tariq Aziz described the restoration of U.S.-Iraqi diplomatic ties as a reflection of Iraq's growing importance in the world and its political maturity.[124] As U.S.-Iraqi ties were strengthening, the Reagan administration made overtures to Iran, leading to what became known as the Iran-Contra affair. In the United States, the secret sales of weapons to Iran were interpreted as futile and embarrassing attempts by the Reagan administration either to exploit a geopolitical opening to Iran by currying favor with "moderate" factions in the Islamic Republic, or to influence Iran to help bring about the release of U.S. hostages believed to be held in Lebanon by pro-Iranian groups. Although these factors may have influenced the United States in its "strategic opening'" to Iran in the mid-1980s, there were other equally important variables that influenced the Reagan administration to sell arms to the Islamic Republic.

During the summer of 1985, analysts in Reagan's National Security Council and the CIA prepared a report predicting the imminent downfall of Ayatollah Khomeini and the Iranian government.[125] The CIA's Iran analyst, Graham Fuller, predicted a fierce struggle for power as a result of the demise of the Iranian government, [126] and based on intelligence information, the National Security Council predicted that long-term U.S. interests would be threatened if Iran disintegrated.[127] In hindsight, the analyses contained in these reports were faulty, but they nevertheless contributed to the decision leading to the Reagan administration's arms sales to the Islamic Republic.[128]

Another explanation for U.S. arms sales to Iran is based on the theory that the principal objective of the Reagan administration's geopolitical opening to the Islamic Republic was to encourage a military coup that would bring to power "some person or group less hostile to the U.S. and Israel."[129] It was hoped that the arms would be funneled to the coup leaders. The arms sales were also supposed to serve Israel's geopolitical objectives by preoccupying Iraq with war with Iran, thus weakening the eastern flank of Arab opposition to Israel. As became evident later, Israel did play an active role in the arms shipments to Iran and in promoting U.S. policies toward Iran.[130] Irrespective of the causes of the Iran-Contra affair, the revelations of the Reagan administration's secret deals with the Islamic Republic created a political

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whirlwind that led to another major U.S. tilt toward Iraq.

The Reagan administration distanced itself from the implications of the Iran-Contra affair by taking a more passive posture toward Iraq and its suppression of the Kurds. In addition to reports made by independent human rights organizations about Iraq's destruction of Kurdish villages, the United States had firsthand reports from its own investigating officials that confirmed allegations made against the Ba'thi regime by independent organizations. For example, Peter Galbraith, at that time a professional staff member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who visited Iraqi Kurdistan in 1987, prepared an extensive report documenting Iraq's destruction of Kurdish villages. In Galbraith's words: "The place [Iraqi Kurdistan] had a kind of eerie silence and beauty, but what had once been an area filled with villages and life and some 2 million people was suddenly empty. The Kurdish villages that had been there almost since the beginning of time were gone. Their inhabitants had been moved to concentration camps erected hastily around a few major towns."[131] Although the U.S. Senate passed resolutions aimed at punishing Iraq, particularly after reports of the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds became public, neither President Reagan nor President Bush took any meaningful actions. It was only after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, that the Bush administration shifted its benign policy toward Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

Of course, it was not just the power brokers in Washington who remained silent in the face of Iraqi atrocities. As Christopher Hitchens poignantly observed:

> How many lobbyists and arms peddlers spent how many evenings during the eighties at the Washington dinner table of Iraq's U.S. ambassador, Nizar Hamdoon? And how often, do you imagine, was Hamdoon asked even the most delicately phrased question about his government's continued killing of the Kurds, including unarmed women and children?[132]

Even some policy-oriented intellectuals, who had become prisoners of their own anti-Iranian rhetoric, encouraged the administration to pursue a pro-Ba'thi foreign policy. Again, Christopher Hitchens's remarks are worth repeating:

> It can be amusing to look up some of Saddam's former fans. Allow me to open for you the April 27, 1987, issue of *The New Republic*, where we find an essay engagingly entitled "Back Iraq," by Daniel Pipes and Laurie Mylroie. These two distinguished Establishment interpreters, under the unavoidable subtitle "It's time for a U.S. 'tilt,' managed to anticipate the recent crisis [Iraq's invasion of Kuwait] by more than three years. Sadly they got the name of the enemy wrong.[133]

In the same vein, a report prepared by three military analysts at the U.S. Army War College, and released just before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, supported Saddam Hussein by claiming that he enjoyed significant popular support. The report concluded: "Thus today in Iraq we have a regime that views its rule as legitimate, and an army that is confident and supportive of the regime's policy; on top of which, all opposition inside Iraq has collapsed. The Kurdish movement has been crushed. . . . The Iraq of today is not the same entity that existed when the

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[Iran-Iraq] war broke out in 1980. . . . We must do everything in our power to gain appreciation of the scope of these changes."[134] On the issue of Iraq's chemical weapons use, the report sought to exonerate the Ba'thi government by stating that there was no conclusive evidence that Baghdad used poison gas against its Kurdish population. The authors of this Pentagon report reiterated Saddam Hussein's oft-mentioned justification for possession of chemical weapons:

> In the specific case of Iraq's possession of chemicals, Baghdad cited national security as a justification, arguing that chemical weapons are the answer to Iranian zealotry. The chemicals inspire panic in the fanatical Iranians, and are thus effective in breaking up their human wave attacks. Viewed in this light, gas can be seen as the Iraqis' most significant deterrent.[135]

In view of these analyses, it was not surprising that Saddam Hussein resorted to the use of chemical weapons with relative impunity.

THE INVASION OF KUWAIT, THE PERSIAN GULF WAR, AND THE KURDISH REVOLT

On August 2, 1990, Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait after several weeks of acrimonious charges by Saddam Hussein against the rulers of Kuwait for overproducing oil, lowering prices, and thus "impoverishing" Iraq, which needed higher oil revenues to finance reconstruction projects after eight years of war with neighboring Iran. After occupying Kuwait, Saddam Hussein revived the old Iraqi claim to Kuwait and declared it to be the nineteenth province of Iraq.[136] President George H. W. Bush ordered the deployment of a large number of U.S. air, naval, and ground troops in and around Saudi Arabia under Operation Desert Shield. When Operation Desert Shield was transformed into Operation Desert Storm with the start of the Allied war against Iraq in January 1991, the United States had deployed over 500,000 troops in the Arabian peninsula.

With the largest deployment of U.S. troops overseas since the heyday of the Vietnam War, President Bush identified four goals: (1) the unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait, (2) the protection of the lives of U.S. citizens living in Kuwait and Iraq, (3) the defense of Saudi Arabia and a commitment to the security and stability of the Gulf, and (4) the restoration of the al-Sabah family as the legitimate government of Kuwait.[137] Perhaps the fifth, but unstated, goal in confronting Iraqi aggression against Kuwait was the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Sadly, nowhere in the U.S. agenda was mention made of helping popular democratic institutions and forces, or aiding in the Middle Eastern people's struggle for self-determination. Well aware of the abysmal human rights records and undemocratic natures of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, perhaps the United States felt inhibited in this regard.

The Iraqi regime, which had been courted and supported by the United States throughout the 1980s, was turned overnight into a demonic entity with superpower ambitions. Reports of Iraq

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using chemical weapons against the Kurds and Iranians, which had been ignored, were publicized in U.S. print and electronic media as if they were novel revelations. The Iraqi dictator was described as another Hitler by the Bush administration and transformed into "a worldwide metaphysical threat. . . . [Iraq] was verbally obliterated except for its by now isolated leader."[138] A host of analysts joined in a chorus of condemnations of Iraq. A host of individuals in academic, journalistic, and policymaking circles, who had in one way or another supported Saddam Hussein's foreign policy in the 1980s, joined the bandwagon with no compunction.

On the morning of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Jalal Talabani, who was at his home in Damascus, was informed by a friend of Saddam Hussein's latest move. The Iraqi Kurdish leader reportedly expressed satisfaction at hearing this news, thought that Saddam Hussein had committed a monumental blunder, and predicted that it would lead to his downfall.[139] On August 12, 1990, Talabani made his second trip to the United States in two years, hoping he would succeed in attracting U.S. support for his PUK. According to one account, Talabani met with middle-ranking State Department officials and offered to raise a thirty-thousand-man army in northern Iraq within weeks in order to reduce pressure on U.S. forces stationed in Saudi Arabia. Talabani also offered to launch guerrilla attacks in cities throughout Iraq and to try to assassinate Saddam Hussein on behalf of the United States. U.S. officials were not receptive to Talabani's offers, causing a Talabani aide to threaten to make a deal with Saddam instead because "in this world, there are no permanent enemies."[140] While in the United States, Talabani reportedly also met with Senator Claiborne Pell, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Senator John Kerry, chairman of the subcommittee on terrorism. Neither senator endorsed U.S. involvement in Kurdish armed rebellion against Saddam Hussein, nor did they promise to arrange U.S. funding for Iraqi opposition movements.[141]

With the start of Allied attacks against Iraq, the Kurds feared that they might become the victims of a war they did not support. Specifically, the Kurds were apprehensive about the consequences of U.S. bombing runs originating from the Incirlik air base in Turkey against targets in Kurdish-inhabited northern and western Iraq. They also feared an Iraqi backlash against Turkey that would result in Turkish counterattacks. As one Kurdish civil rights lawyer stated, "We see the war as a disaster. . . . If Turkey fights Iraq, it will be mainly the Kurdish population that gets hurt."[142] Massoud Barzani sought to keep Iraq's Kurdish areas out of the war zone by rejecting outside pressure to open a second front against Saddam's forces. Barzani's main concern was that if a second front were established, Saddam Hussein might retaliate by using chemical weapons against Kurdish villages as he did in 1988.[143]

Notwithstanding Massoud Barzani's initial hesitation to open a second front against Saddam Hussein, Iraqi Kurds revolted in March 1991 after the defeat of Saddam's military by the U.S.-led forces in the southern theater. A CIA-run radio station (The Voice of Free Iraq) operating from Jedda, Saudi Arabia, had been encouraging a Kurdish revolt for several weeks, and the Kurds were led to believe that they would receive outside assistance if they led an uprising against the Iraqi government.[144] Initially, the Kurds gained control of a few cities, but they were driven back by Iraqi forces attacking them from the air and land. As a consequence, Kurdish villages were devastated once more, and another mass exodus of Kurdish refugees

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started. An estimated 500,000 Kurds fled to Turkey and 1.5 million to Iran when they realized they were defenseless. Thus, the number of Kurdish casualties was reduced compared to the devastated Shi'a south, which had suffered the brunt of the Allied bombings.[145] Once again, fear of reprisal appeared to have been a major factor in the Kurdish flight in March and April 1991. Saddam Hussein's cousin, Ali Hassan Majid, who led the 1988 poison gas attacks against the Kurds, was appointed interior minister after the Kurdish uprising started. According to eyewitness reports, the new interior minister traveled to Kirkuk, rounded up a large number of young men, and warned them of severe consequences if they did not cease their revolt.[146] According to Kurdish eyewitnesses, people had been fleeing Kirkuk and other Kurdish cities in large numbers since early March when the revolt broke out. In Sulaymanieh, many people fled on April 3, just before the Iraqis arrived and began bombing the city. International eyewitness accounts reported that people were afraid that what happened in Kirkuk would take place in Sulaymanieh, and they fled the city before the Iraqi army could descend upon them.[147]

In addition to terrorizing the civilian population, Saddam Hussein's crack-down on the Kurdish uprising left deep rifts in the opposition. Some members of the Kurdish opposition made matters worse when they began to harass and threaten Kurds who worked for the government as civil servants or who worked in the oil refineries. In any case, the effectiveness of the Iraqi forces in putting down the Kurdish rebellion and the plight of the refugees compelled the two leading groups within the Iraq Kurdistan Front, the PUK and KDP, to seek peace with the Iraqi regime.

Many Kurds felt that with a defeated Saddam Hussein, the time was right to sign an agreement that would maximize their prospects of gaining autonomy within a federated Iraqi state. Furthermore, the Kurds reasoned that if another person or group came to power in Baghdad, there would be no guarantee that they would not behave the same way toward the Kurds as Saddam Hussein. Without a peaceful settlement, some Kurdish leaders also thought that there would be a permanent refugee problem, creating fertile ground for outside powers to exploit the Kurdish situation and "for all sorts of negative tendencies" to develop within the refugee population.[148] Another impetus for an Iraqi-Kurdish rapprochement was the high price Kurdish soldiers had paid by serving in the Iraqi army during the Gulf War. According to one estimate, two hundred thousand Kurds were members of the Iraqi occupation army in Kuwait. Although no casualty figures are available, it is safe to assume that they were among the several thousand Iraqi soldiers who died during the saturation bombing runs of Iraqi targets during the war.

Many reported Iraqi army deserters who escaped with their weapons to Iran were Kurdish soldiers.[149] Kurdish soldiers were strongly criticized by Shaikh Saud al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti ambassador to the United States, for alleged brutality against Kuwaitis. In an interview given to *USA Today,* Ambassador al-Sabah claimed that eighty percent of the Iraqi occupation soldiers who were "raping Kuwait, pillaging Kuwait were Kurds... . I don't personally have much sympathy as you have for the Kurds... . They are more brutal, they are more violent than the rest of the Iraqis. . . . There are Kurds who stole everything and pillaged everything."[150] Surprisingly, such sentiments were similar to the Iraqi government's principle of collective

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responsibility, utilized when punishing the Kurdish population. This principle, according to Samir al-Khalil, had been "legislatively recognized and systematically practiced inside Iraq" against the Kurds. It transferred blame to entire families or communities for the transgressions of one or more members of that community.[151]

The first round of Iraqi-Kurdish negotiations was held in late April 1991 in Baghdad between Ba'thi authorities and a team of Kurdish negotiators representing the Iraq Kurdistan Front headed by Jalal Talabani. The other members of the Kurdish team included Rasoul Mamand, secretary general of the Kurdish Socialist Party, Sami Abdul Rahman, secretary general of the People's Party of Kurdistan, and Nashirwan Barzani, a nephew of Massoud Barzani, representing the KDP. The inclusion of representatives of various Kurdish groups as members of the negotiating team was intended to demonstrate that the Kurds were a united front.

Talabani was careful not to raise high expectations. He insisted that he was simply negotiating with the Iraqis and was not intent on signing a final agreement with the government. Nonetheless, he described a new mood of "realism" in Baghdad with regard to recognition of Kurdish autonomy. As the talks progressed, Talabani stated that he had "never seen such a positive attitude before. We could not overthrow them [the Ba'thi forces], and they could not crush us. So we are both looking for another solution, which is a peaceful solution."[152] Responding to criticism of his overtures toward Saddam Hussein, especially from the Shi'a opposition in the south, Talabani and his colleagues retorted that anyone in their position would have done the same thing to avert a calamitous tragedy. "We cannot accept another Armenia and the depopulation of Kurdistan. I would have been against negotiations otherwise. But we cannot just act as a political party, we have three million refugees to think about. We need them to go home and rebuild. . . . We have no friends to help us... . If we were supported by others, we could fight for a long time, but without the Kurdish people at home, we can't do anything."[153]

Despite the start of negotiations, most Kurds doubted they would succeed and continued to oppose the regime. To some observers, negotiating with Saddam Hussein was an acknowledgment of the failure of Kurdish fighters to wage a sustained, unified, full-scale war against the regime. Even when the Kurds occupied a town, they were unable to govern it and establish order. In the words of a Kurdish elder, there was "no recognized form of cooperation among the clans. They did not know how to operate the tanks, planes, and helicopters they seized from the Iraqis."[154] These sentiments were echoed by Jalal Talabani as he lamented the Kurdish lack of unity and organizational cohesiveness.[155]

The Talabani-led team of Kurdish negotiators did not sign an agreement with the Iraqi government. However, another round of Iraqi-Kurdish talks began in June 1991. This time, the negotiations were led by the KDP's Massoud Barzani, whose talks with Saddam generated optimism that peace was at hand when the KDP announced the impending signing of an agreement on Kurdish autonomy. The status of Kirkuk, which had derailed many previous negotiations, remained an unresolved issue, causing opposition to the impending deal with Saddam Hussein. At the same time, Iran announced the formation of the Kurdish Islamic Movement to oppose any concessions to the Iraqi regime. [156] The new movement, to be led by

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Ahmad Barzani, encompassed "all Islamic elements" who rejected compromise with the Ba'thi regime.

A major reason for Iran's opposition was the provision in the agreement that committed the Kurds to joining Saddam's forces in fighting Iraqi Shi'as in the south. Iran was also intent on exploiting the close collaboration between the Iraqi regime and the Iranian opposition mujahidin guerrillas by enticing the Kurds to attack the mujahidin forces inside Iraq. Eyewitness reports that publicized mujahidin participation on the side of the Iraqi army against the Kurdish uprising helped the Iranian cause. British journalist David Hirst reported on one incident in which the Kurdish *peshmerga* trapped fifty-seven pro-Iraqi mujahidin fighters (including seventeen women) in a school and shot them all to death.[157]

Although the details of Barzani's agreement with the Iraqi government were not publicly divulged, Kurdish negotiators revealed the outline of the agreement:

1. The Kurdistan Front would be obligated to support the 1968 revolution that brought the Ba'th Party to power. (Barzani said his agreement with Saddam called for separating the Ba'th Party from the government.)
2. The Kurdish Front would need the Ba'th's permission to contact foreign governments and organizations.
3. The [Kurdish] Front would be obliged to back the Ba'th Party against any of its enemies. First, that would mean Iran. Second, [it would require] the Kurds to help suppress the Shi'as in the south.
4. All Kurdish political prisoners would be freed immediately.
5. The Kurds' clandestine radio stations would be shut down and they [the Kurdish groups] would get time on the government radio and television stations in the [Kurdish] region.
6. Once the oil sales resume, Baghdad and the Kurds will negotiate a formula for turning over a "significant" share of the revenues to the regional government.
7. Baghdad will compensate those Kurds whose homes have been destroyed or who suffered torture at the central government's hands.
8. Kurdish elders will rule the region for three months at which point elections will be held in the [Kurdish] autonomous region. National elections will be held within six to twelve months.[158]

For a while, it seemed that all partners in the Iraq Kurdistan Front were going to agree with Massoud Barzani and sign a peace agreement with Baghdad. However, Jalal Talabani's PUK rejected Barzani's plan. Instead, Talabani, in a surprise announcement from Turkey, proposed that Turkey take a more active role in solving the Iraqi Kurdish problem and denounced Abdullah Ocalan and his PKK for continuing the Kurdish struggle against the Turkish state.[159] Once again, the Kurds became victims of their own personal and group rivalries.

In July 1991, talks on Kurdish autonomy were moved from Baghdad to the Kurdish city of Irbil, where Kurdish leaders met with Izzat Ibrahim, Saddam Hussein's second in command in the ruling Revolutionary Command Council. In addition to the autonomy demands made in prior talks, the Kurds put forward a new proposal for establishing democracy in Iraq that

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would involve the oppressed Shi'a majority.[160] Although no agreement was reached, the Iraqis, perhaps by default, allowed more Kurdish armed presence in the region, including the major cities of Irbil and Sulaymanieh. The close proximity of armed *peshmerga* to Iraqi troops caused a number of skirmishes between the two sides. On July 21, after three days of fighting, the *peshmerga*, mostly from the KDP, ousted Iraqi troops from Sulaymanieh.[161] This marked the first time since the March uprisings that a major Kurdish city was reclaimed by Kurdish forces. Iraqi authorities accused Iran of inciting the Kurdish attacks on the Iraqis by sending money, infiltrators, and weapons to the Kurds. This charge of interference in Iraq's domestic affairs was vehemently denied by Iran, and it accused Iraq of blaming exogenous factors for its own inability to solve its Kurdish problem peacefully.[162] Ironically, after their capture of Sulaymanieh, the *peshmerga* found themselves providing police protection to officials who had been appointed by the Iraqi government, including Sulaymanieh's governor.

The Kurdish uprisings in Iraq and the subsequent refugee problems in the aftermath of the Gulf War presented major challenges to the United States and its allies in the war, including Turkey. The Turks were not pleased with the flood of over 500,000 Kurdish refugees into their country. In fact, they opposed the mass entry of Kurds into Turkey and closed their borders for a few days immediately after the first surge of refugees entered southeastern Turkey. At the same time, the Turkish government continued a secret dialogue with Iraqi Kurdish leaders, mindful of the fact that promoting autonomy for Iraqi Kurds would have unpredictable repercussions for Turkey's restive Kurdish population. President Ozal's decision to hold talks with the Iraqi Kurds was apparently predicated on the assumption that they were about to gain autonomy and might even declare independence from Iraq, which the Turkish government opposes.[163]

Furthermore, the Turks wanted to prevent the creation of permanent or semipermanent refugee camps and their "Palestinianization," in which the camps would become breeding grounds for Kurdish guerrillas who would fight alongside PKK *peshmerga* against Turkey. Also, Ankara feared that refugee camps would become "a new source of discord between Turkey and the West, if the West supported Kurdish nationalist aspirations."[164] An additional factor that prompted Turkey to oppose the mass entry of Kurdish refugees was that it viewed the refugee exodus as a deliberate plot by Saddam Hussein to destabilize Turkey. One high-ranking Turkish army officer contended that if Saddam Hussein wanted to prevent a mass exodus of Kurds from Iraq, he could have easily ordered Iraqi soldiers to encircle the Kurds, rather than "pushing" them toward the Turkish border.[165]

To the surprise of some outsiders, pressure to prevent a large influx of Iraqi Kurds into Turkey after the Gulf War also came from within Kurdish circles in Turkey. This marked one of the few instances in which the interests of the Turkish Kurds and the state coincided. As a member of Van's Kurdish committee stated: "If the Turkish government opens the border. . . . then the world will forget the problem. It will be a matter of refugees, of money, and we Kurds will have to forget our land."[166] When Allied forces established a "safe haven" zone inside Iraq, deploying seventeen thousand troops, Turkey welcomed the move. However, friction and misunderstanding caused by the presence of Western troops near the Iraqi-Turkish border led to uneasiness among Kurds about the wisdom of such a force. Opposition leaders and the

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Turkish press complained that "US and British commanders are acting as colonial masters."[167] The Western allies were sensitive about this issue as well. When a British marine unit manhandled a high-level Turkish official and prevented him from inspecting the Kurdish camps, the unit was ordered out immediately, and British defense secretary Tom King was sent to Ankara to deliver a formal apology to the Turkish government.

PKK guerrillas exploited the presence of Western troops by accusing the Turkish government of mortgaging the Kurdish future to "international imperialism and neocolonialism" and betraying Turkish national interests and sovereignty rights. As a result, the PKK launched a series of attacks on Turkish targets, culminating in the murder of three high-ranking provincial officials in Sohal on April 28, 1991, and the winning of local support for its stance against the Western military presence in Kurdistan.[168] The PKK's resurgence was reflected in the volume of threats issued by its operatives against Allied installations in northern Iraq and Turkey, and against "traitors" Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, who engaged in dialogues with the Turkish and Iraqi governments.

Finally, the stationing of five thousand U.S., British, and French troops on Turkish soil beginning in July 1991 under the media-bestowed code name Operation Poised Hammer generated pitfalls for Turkey. This force, which was intended to act as a deterrence to further Iraqi military moves against the Kurds and, if deterrence failed, to function as a "rapid reaction force" to intervene in Iraq, prompted domestic opposition within Turkey. The Turkish press and opposition leaders reacted negatively to the stationing of the force on Turkish soil. Many Turks not only feared that their country's sovereignty might be jeopardized by the presence of a Western rapid reaction force in their country, but also thought it imprudent for Turkey to alienate its neighbors by collaborating with Western countries in interfering in their domestic affairs. Erdal Inonu, the Social Democratic opposition leader, has also complained bitterly that Turkey had no duty to act as protector of ethnic groups in other countries. If such protection was to be provided, it should have been under the auspices of the United Nations. All in all, the broad spectrum of Turks who expressed displeasure at their country's involvement in the Allied military venture feared that in the end the Western rapid reaction force would be the "hammer" and Turkey the "anvil" of Operation Poised Hammer.[169]

When the Gulf War ended in February 1991 with Iraq's military defeat and what amounted to an unconditional surrender by Saddam Hussein's government, the Bush administration was confident that the Iraqi military would stage a coup and overthrow Saddam Hussein. The CIA estimated that Saddam's regime would be overthrown within six months to a year after the disorderly and humiliating Iraqi surrender and capitulation to U.S.-imposed conditions.[170] When the predicted overthrow of Saddam Hussein did not materialize, Washington, in concert with British and Saudi Arabian officials, began to court a variety of Iraqi opposition groups, including the largely discredited exiled groups in London and Syria.

The U.S.-led search for a suitable (i.e., pro-Western and/or pro-Saudi) replacement for Saddam Hussein was disrupted by spontaneous, grassroots uprisings by the Shi'a majority in the south in early March 1991 and the Kurdish minority in the north immediately thereafter. Fearing the breakup of the Iraqi state, the United States initially ruled out intervention in defense of the anti-Saddam Hussein uprisings. The Bush administration explained its refusal to

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help in terms of its desire not to interfere in other countries' internal affairs. As a result, on March 5, four days after President Bush had publicly exhorted the Iraqi people to "get rid of Saddam," the White House issued a statement saying: "We don't intend to get involved in Iraq's internal affairs."[171] This assertion was astonishing, given the fact that the United States had just massively involved itself in Iraq's affairs and was not only encouraging the overthrow of the Iraqi government (a call that became more strident in tone and repetitiveness throughout the summer of 1991), but was also taking active steps to further destabilize Iraq.

The lack of U.S. assistance for the Kurdish and Shi'a rebels had little to do with observing the internationally recognized principle of noninterference in other countries' domestic affairs. The fear of an Iraqi breakup, and the regional instability that such a breakup would engender, was the primary factor in dissuading the Bush administration from assisting the rebels. Furthermore, the Bush administration had concluded that the insurgencies would fail to dislodge Saddam Hussein. Both Washington and Riyadh still felt that a coup, staged by officers controlled by or sympathetic to U.S. and Saudi interests, was the preferred option.[I72] The U.S. phobia about Iran also contributed to the Bush administration's hesitance to provide immediate help to the Shi'as. As a State Department official explained, the United States "shared with the Saudis a concern about Iranian-backed radical Shi'a coming to power in Iraq."[173] When the Kurdish uprising followed, the United States feared the total collapse of Baghdad's military and the "Lebanonization" of Iraq. In addition, concerns about the spill-over effects of the success of the Kurdish uprising in Iraq, and its implications for Turkish stability, prompted the Bush administration to take a neutral stand.

Even if the United States had decided to intervene, some argued, there would have been no guarantee that the suffering of the Kurds would be alleviated. As Professor Shibley Telhami of Cornell University argued in an op-ed article in the *New York Times,* U.S. intervention would have misled the Kurds because the United States "cannot shape Iraq's political system. U.S. involvement would only excite the Kurds enough to make the fight bloodier, and they would be let down later—their lot for decades."[174] Conservative analyst Daniel Pipes also warned the Bush administration about overzealous involvement in Iraq's civil war with the hope of U.S. forces in control and General Schwarzkopf ruling the country. As Pipes cautioned: "It sounds romantic, but watch out. Like the Israelis in southern Lebanon nine years ago, American troops would find themselves quickly hated. . . . Staying in place would become too painful, leaving too humiliating. "[175] Debates about the wisdom of U.S. military involvement in Iraqi Kurdish affairs became academic as events inside Iraq compelled the Bush administration to extend its involvement beyond providing food and shelter to the growing number of Kurdish refugees; steps needed to be taken to ensure their physical safety.

With the specter of thousands of hungry and dying Kurds trapped in the mountainous region of Kurdistan looming larger, pressure on the international community to intervene grew stronger. The European Community (EC), in its April 8, 1991, emergency summit meeting in Luxembourg, endorsed a proposal by British prime minister John Major to establish a "safe haven" for the Kurds in northern Iraq. A similar proposal had been made earlier by President Ozal of Turkey. The safe haven would operate under the auspices of the United Nations, with troops from the Allied forces, and involve a two-stage process. The first stage would involve

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bringing the Kurds down from the mountains, and the second stage would require the safe return of the Kurds to their homes.[176] Prime Minister Major contended that his proposal was within the framework of the U.N. Security Council's resolution authorizing humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq. Britain also cited the 1948 Genocide Convention as legal justification for the implementation of his proposal to prevent the "genocide" of the Kurds. The United States supported the legality of establishing a UN-controlled safe haven in northern Iraq by referring to a recent precedent in which the U.N. established safe areas for Indochinese refugees on the Cambodian-Thai border.

The Bush administration warned Iraq not to interfere with the humanitarian efforts to aid the Kurdish refugees. The United States prevented the Iraqi military from flying north of the thirty-sixth parallel, located just south of Irbil. Then, on April 17, the United States moved troops into northern Iraq to secure sites for establishing safety zones for the Kurds under the direction of US, British, and French soldiers. From the start, the legality of establishing an extraterritorial unit inside a sovereign country was challenged. Ahmad Hussein Khudayer, the new Iraqi foreign minister, rejected the U.S. move by stating that his country and the United Nations had already reached an agreement to ameliorate the Kurdish crisis by allowing the U.N. to run "humanitarian centers" for the refugees in northern and southern Iraq. Prime Minister Hamadi reiterated his country's intention to resist "with its means" Western military encroachments in Iraqi Kurdistan.[177] The Soviet Foreign Ministry issued a statement casting doubt on the legality of the U.S. move. Vitaly Churkin, spokesman for the Soviet Foreign Ministry, indicated that establishing a safe haven without Iraq's consent would violate the U.N. charter and set "an undesirable precedent." Furthermore, Churkin noted the serious problem such a safe haven would create for the U.N. Security Council "in connection with the need to define borders, the international legal status of the zone, and the ethnic makeup of its population."[178] The Soviets, however, were pressured by the United States and its Western allies to drop their opposition, and by late April, they gave a guarded endorsement of the idea of a safety zone inside Iraq.

By May 1991, Western forces had established a seventy-five-by-thirty-mile safety zone. Although United Nations observers were present in the zone and one hundred to five hundred U.N. security guards moved into the area, it was clear that it was a U.S.-run zone, and not a U.N.-run zone. However, U.S. officials indicated that U.S. and other Western troops would move out of the area soon and that they would like the United Nations to run the safety zone in Iraq. On May 22, the United States appeared to extend the zone to Dahuk, located just outside the declared safety zone for the Kurds. Although some feared that the United States was unilaterally expanding its military presence in northern Iraq, U.S. officials insisted that this move was a temporary measure designed to allow doctors, engineers, and other specialists to provide the needed services to convince 100,000 Kurdish refugees to return home. By agreement, Iraqi soldiers evacuated Dahuk, but were allowed to stay within four miles of the city limits.[179]

By mid-July 1991, Western troops had completed their withdrawal from the safety zone in northern Iraq. As previously mentioned, after evacuating from Iraq, Western forces set up a rapid reaction force based in Silopi in Turkey, five miles from the Iraqi border. Although the

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size, structure, and term of existence of this force was to be finalized in consultation with Turkey, the force's stated mission was to prevent another Iraqi attack on the Kurds, and hence obviate the need for a mass Kurdish exodus to Turkey. The location of the rapid reaction force close to the Cudi mountain range could create problems; the area has long been an important hideout for the PKK guerrillas. Periodic clashes have taken place between the PKK forces and Turkish soldiers near the Silopi base, and in early July 1991, Silopi was the scene of a skirmish between the two sides.[180] In early August, Turkish troops, backed by fighter planes and helicopters, launched a massive five-day operation against Kurdish strongholds and carried their military attacks into Iraq. Kurdish villagers accused the Allied troops stationed in Turkey of acquiescing to this operation. Given the PKK's stated opposition to the Western military presence in Turkey, it is conceivable that troops of the rapid reaction force might be dragged into the long-standing Kurdish-Turkish conflict with incalculable consequences.

Notwithstanding U.S. involvement on behalf of the Kurds, in the long run, the contours of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East are determined by macro concerns such as maintaining the stability of friendly regimes and enhancing strategic, political, and economic interests in the region. Within this context, the United States will not promote Kurdish nationalism, and few in Washington, or in Baghdad, believe the sincerity of the oft-repeated Kurdish political slogan "autonomy for Kurdistan, democracy for Iraq." As a senior Bush administration Middle East analyst put it: "It's autonomy today, but a separate state tomorrow. We all know that." Another Bush administration official put it more bluntly, saying: "It probably sounds callous, but we did the best thing not to get near [the Kurdish revolt]. They're nice people, and they're cute, but they're really just bandits. They spend as much time fighting each other as central authority. They're losers."[181] Such cynical views undoubtedly contributed to the formulation of Washington's policies toward the Kurdish uprising in Iraq in 1991.

Finally, Iran's response to the Kurdish refugee problem needs to be examined. Unlike Turkey, which closed its border to the Iraqi Kurds and reopened it only because of international pressure and the massive humanitarian aid given to it by international agencies and the West, Iran opened its border to fleeing Kurds from the beginning. The number of Kurdish refugees in Iran eventually reached 1.5 million, triple the number in Turkey. Given the fact that Iran already housed one of the largest refugee populations in the world, mostly Afghans and Iraqi Shi'as, the influx of Iraqi Kurds gave the Islamic Republic the largest refugee population in the world.

The response of the international community to the Kurdish refugee problem in Iran was slow. When some Western countries finally did contribute to the humanitarian efforts of the Iranian government, the response was minimal compared to Turkey. The disproportionate response of the West to the plight of the Kurdish refugees in Iran suggests that Iran's isolation from the West, particularly the United States, created a blind spot in the eyes of the international donor agencies, which are dominated by Western donors. By mid-May 1991, the United States had contributed more than $200 million for Kurdish refugee relief operations, less than $20 million of which was earmarked to assist the Kurdish refugees in Iran. For every dollar spent by international relief agencies on a Kurdish refugee in Iran, $7.60 was spent on a Kurdish refugee in Turkey. At the same time, according to international relief agencies, Iran was spending $10 million per day from its strained budget to care for the Kurdish refugees in

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Iran.[182] As an analysis made by the U.S. Committee for Refugees indicated, the net result of this disproportionality was that the "refugees for whom Iran was the nearest border were penalized for their host government's poor relations with the United States. The foreign policy bias that drives U.S. refugee policy not only resulted in less food and dirtier water for refugees in Iran, but perhaps accounts for the inability of "the best minds of the refugee world' to see the approach of the most monumental refugee wave in memory."[183]

For the magnitude of its response to the Kurdish plight and the enormity of the economic burden it shouldered to accommodate the refugees' needs, Iran received praise from the Kurds. As one Iraqi Kurd stated: "The point is not whether our refugees are well fed. We must first thank the Islamic Republic which opened its borders and did not let our people die in the snow."[184] Likewise, several international relief agencies praised Iran's efforts on behalf of the Kurdish refugees. As an international relief officer asked: "Which European country would have admitted such a flow of refugees? . . . [I am] impressed by the efficiency of the Iranian administration and the rapidity with which they settled these refugees."[185]

From the beginning of the first refugee influx, Iranian officials and religious figures issued edicts asking all Iranians to assist the Kurds as a national, moral, and religious duty. As a consequence, the Kurds were not simply quartered in refugee camps, many were welcomed into Iranian homes throughout Kurdistan and Western Azerbaijan. By mid-April, the population of the city of Piranshahr had reached 125,000, up from its pre-refugee size of 25,000. Schools, mosques, and other public centers in many Iranian cities were turned into shelters for the Iraqi Kurds.[186] However, as the number of refugees soared, Iranian resources reached a breaking point. Health conditions began to deteriorate in some refugee camps. Dysentery and the lack of adequate medical care caused deaths in overcrowded camps. Typhoid fever broke out in a camp in Salmas, which housed 25,000 refugees, raising concern among the medical staff that without outside assistance, death tolls in some camps would increase rapidly.[187] This and similar incidents compelled the Iranian authorities to ask for immediate outside assistance.

Political obstacles hampered relief efforts from the West. First, Iran remained suspicious of U.S. aid. Officials in the Islamic Republic suspected that the United States wanted to destabilize the region by stationing troops in the area on the pretext of establishing a "safe haven" for the Kurds. As some "radical" Iranian officials saw it, the main objective of creating a safety zone in northern Iraq was the de facto partitioning of Iraq and the establishment of "a second Israel" in the region.[188] Second, the Bush administration did not want to signal a diplomatic opening to Iran by being overanxious to send relief for the refugees in Iranian territory. However, in late April 1991, a U.S. Air Force C-141 transport plane received authorization to deliver a 145,000-pound load of privately donated blankets to Iran, marking the first time since 1979 that a U.S. military plane landed in Tehran's Mehrabad airport on an officially divulged mission.

Shortly after receiving the first U.S. shipment, Iran complained bitterly about the poor quality of the items sent for the refugees. The Iranians criticized the shipment for being "soiled and unusable," and indicated that it would be returned. Secondhand clothing, quite common in Western donations and acceptable by recipients of aid in many countries, is frowned upon in Iran. Within Islamic Iran's cultural framework, donations of secondhand clothing are equated

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with the perception that the recipients are unworthy, U.S. officials rejected Iranian claims and declared that all items shipped to Iran were usable.[189]

European aid to Iran had a more auspicious beginning than that of the United States. Iran accepted financial and other types of aid from the EC, and even allowed German troops to enter Iran and transport relief supplies to, and build refugee camps for, the Kurds. This marked the first time that the Islamic Republic had allowed foreign military forces to set up a base for any kind of mission inside the country. However, political problems soon surfaced between Iranian governmental authorities and European aid workers. Some aid workers and medical staff complained about red tape and interference in their routine functions. Others complained about the exorbitant landing fees that some relief agencies were allegedly charged. In May, a Norwegian plane carrying relief supplies was reportedly forced to abort its mission when it was informed of the landing fees, which it could not afford to pay.[190]

Another major complaint by European donors was that their contributions did not receive adequate recognition from Iranian officials. As a result, an EC representative in Tehran in May 1991 asked the Iranian government to issue an official statement in the Iranian press detailing the amount of aid given by the EC for the Kurdish refugees. This aid, which amounted to $250 million, included tents, blankets, and food. In addition, some $150 million of relief was brought in by groups associated with member countries of the EC.[191] These and similar problems not only reflected the enormous sociocultural and economic strains under which humanitarian relief agencies operated, they also demonstrated the politicization of international humanitarian aid by both donor and recipient countries.

THE REGIONAL CHESS GAME IN POST-SADDAM KURDISTAN

The regional balance of power and strategic alliances once changed dramatically in the aftermath of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime. The condition of the Kurds will ultimately be affected by the chess game involving Turkey, Iran, Israel, and, most importantly, the United States. As I discussed in chapter 3, the Iraqi Kurds today are in the best position than they have been since World War I in affecting their own destiny, and by implication, that of the Kurds in general. However, the Kurdish window of opportunity is narrowing as Iraq meanders through its civil conflict. Although the George W. Bush has projected a confident image of "winning" the war in Iraq and establishing a functioning democracy in that country, Iraq today is a dysfunctional society. The invasion and continued occupation of that country have had unintended consequences that go beyond the borders of Iraq. Peter Galbraith, a veteran observer of Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan, has argued that the country has already "broken up and is in the throes of civil war. The United States cannot put the country back together again and it cannot stop the civil war."[192] If this is the case, then what options do the Kurds have to safeguard their achievements and gains since 2003? For Galbraith, as well as some other U.S. commentators, "a fully independent Kurdistan appears to be a matter of when, not if. The younger generation of Kurdish leaders (those in their forties and younger) have no use for Iraq and will press for full independence as soon as the situation

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allows."[193] In fact, opinion polls conducted in Iraqi Kurdistan have shown that over 95 percent of the Iraqi Kurds favor independence from Iraq.

Turkey and Iran, the two major regional players in Iraqi Kurdistan, as well as the United States, do not favor the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. Each of these players has been playing its "Kurdish card" to affect the outcome of political developments in Kurdistan to suit its own political objectives. Despite the existence of a close alliance between the United States and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), the United States has taken measures to increase the power of Iraq's central government at the expense of the other players. The more confident the Iraqi government becomes, the less likely it is that it will compromise on constitutional issue that are important to the Kurdish region of the country. Although it may not seem likely now, but it is not inconceivable for Washington to betray the Kurds again if it decides that the U.S. long-term interests lie in a strong and centrally-controlled Iraq that could provide Washington with long-term military facilities for power projection and to harass and intimidate Iran. Many U.S. analysts have argued that one of the major unintended consequences of the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime has been the enhanced power and strategic weight of Iran in Iraq.[194] In order to reduce the perceived power of Iran, it is often argued by many U.S. analysts, there should be limits to Iraq's devolution lest it becomes a weak state. It is beyond the scope of this book to deal with the broader U.S.-Iran issues. However, suffice it to say that if Washington and Tehran continue to fight their proxy war in Iraq, the Kurds will inevitably become affected by the outcome of the U.S.-Iran chess game.

The dangerous consequences of U.S.-Iran war of attrition in Iraq were evident when the United States military raided the Iranian Liaison Office in Irbil on January 11, 2007. The ostensible goal of this raid was to capture two senior Iranian *pasdar* officers, but there were no senior officers in the compound when the U.S. forces arrived. Instead, they seized five mid-level diplomats. The Iranian hostages were taken to a U.S. prison in Iraq. The raid and the capture of Iranian officials embarrassed the KRG and put it in an uncomfortable diplomatic position. According to Hoshyar Zibari, Iraq's Kurdish Foreign Minister, the Iranians had been working in Irbil with the official permission, and that Iran's Irbil office had been in operation since 1992 carrying out routine consular activities, such as issuance of visas. Furthermore, Iran contended that the status of the office had changed to a consulate general, and that official diplomatic notes—*note verbale*—had already been exchanged between the governments involved. Therefore, the arrested officials enjoyed diplomatic immunity under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. Massoud Barzani, the KDP leader and president of Iraqi Kurdistan, condemned the capture of Iranian officials and demanded their immediate release. In a tense confrontation, the KRG security forces also surrounded U.S. military vehicles to prevent them from taking further military action.

In a similar direct challenge to the Kurdish authority, the U.S. military forces raided the Sulaymanieh Palace, the city's best hotel, in September 2007 and took Mahmoud Farhady, the head of the visiting Iranian trade delegation, hostage. The Kurdish hosts who had invited the Iranians were outraged. Jalal Talabani, Iraq president and a Sulaymanieh Kurd, called the raid and the capture of Iranian trade delegate "illegal," while Sulaymanieh's governor Dana Majid called it "kidnapping."[195] These two incidents are illustrative of unpleasant repercussions of U.S.-Iran conflict for the Kurds. The Iraqi Kurds are caught between the proverbial rock and a

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hard place—they need to be on the good side of both the United States and Iran. As one Kurdish official stated, Iran is "like an angry big brother. It can reward you or punish you, depending on the mood."[196]

In the months preceding the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the Kurdish autonomous administration waged battle against a Sunni fundamentalist Kurdish group called Ansar al-Islam. This group operated from fortified positions on mountains along the Iranian border and on occasion crossed into Iran for safety. During the early phase of the U.S. attack on Iraq in March 2003, the Iraqi Kurdish *peshmerga* and U.S. forces joined forces against Ansar al-Islam and decimated much of its infrastructure. The original leader of Ansar al-Islam was Najmuddin Faraj Ahmad, an Iraqi Kurds commonly known as Mullah Krekar who entered Norway as a refugee in 1991. Krekar has steadfastly denied that he has been involved in or has ordered any terrorist attacks against the other Kurds.

However, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) has repeatedly asked Norway to extradite Mullah Krekar to northern Iraq to stand trial. Although Norwar revoked Mullah Krekar's refugee status in August 2002 when he traveled to Iraq, allegedly to direct terrorist activities, Krekar has not been extradited as requested by the KRG. In September 2002, Mullah Krekar entered Iran but was arrested by the Iranian authorities and sent to Holland where he was arrested upon arrival in Amsterdam and was later sent to Norway. In February 2003, Norway finally issued a deportation order for Mullah Krekar and ordered him deported to Iraq. However, the order was not implemented because Norway, like many other European countries, does not send individuals back to a country that practices capital punishment. Although the KRG does not as a matter of policy execute individuals, but it has yet to legally abolish the death penalty. In fact, in October 2006, the KRG hanged six members of Ansar al-Islam in Irbil.

The porous Iran border with northern Iraq has allowed a variety of cross-border raids by the remnants of Ansar al-Islam into the Iraqi Kurdish territory. According to Kurdish sources, in early months of 2007, the Ansar forces launched several lethal cross-border raids against the Kurdish *peshmerga* from the Iranian territory.[197] Iran itself has been keenly aware of the danger of such raids and has undertaken a number of raids of its own into the Iraqi territory in pursuit of Ansar al-Islam rebels and other Kurdish groups that use the Iranian territory for cross-border attacks. On August 6, 2007, Iran "began a cross-border artillery barrage at several points along the Iraqi frontier. The rocket mortar fire forced more than 1,000 Kurdish civilians to flee their homes."[198.] These and similar attacks have been a source of tension between Iran and the KRG. The extremist Wahhabi and some Salafi Sunni fundamentalist threat is indeed a source of concern for the Iranian government, especially in light of the increasing presence of Wahhabi extremists in various Sunni mosques in cities of Sanandaj and Sar-e Pol-e Zahab.[199] In short, Iran is unlikely to support groups, like Ansar al-Islam, that are primarily anti-Shi'a and act as destabilizing forces inside Iran.

On the other hands, both the United States and Israel have been lending support to Kurdish elements that seek to destabilize Iran. As has been reported extensively by investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, both the U.S. and Israel have reportedly been conducting a proxy war inside Iranian Kurdistan through their support of the Free Life Party (PJAK) and other

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Kurdish assets.[200] PJAK's leader Rahman Haj Ahmadi, who lives in exile in Germany, even traveled to Washington in July 2007 and met with some U.S. officials. Although Washington has downplayed this event, Biryar Gabar, a PJAK commander from Sanandaj was quoted by *Newsweek's* "exclusive" report from the Iran-Iraq border as having said that Ahmadi's meeting in Washington was with "high level" officials and that they discussed "the future of Iran."[201] What is ironic is that the United States has labeled the PKK a terrorist organization but has cozied up, or at best tolerated, its offspring PJAK. Israel has always viewed its Kurdish card as an important asset in enhancing its strategic interests in the region. As noted by Scott Ritter, Israel's strategic relationship with Turkey has created a condition where Ankara "would turn a blind eye toward Israel's support of Kurds in Iraq and Iran in exchange for Israel's assistance in clamping down on the Kurdish rebellion in Turkey."[202] It is clear by now that the fate of Iraqi Kurdistan is intertwined with the complex web of U.S.-Iran relations and Israeli policies in the region.

Finally Turkish regional geopolitics and Turkey-Iran relations will have a lasting impact on developments in Kurdistan. As I have argued in previous chapters, despite the complex, and at times acrimonious, relations between Iran and Turkey, the two sides have cooperated with each other more often than not in dealing with what is euphemistically called the Kurdish issue.[203] Both Tehran and Ankara routinely hold security meetings with a primary focus on developments in Iraqi Kurdistan, and both have stepped-up their coordinated activities against the PKK and its offshoot PJAK. Turkey, however, has its own security concerns and has undertaken unilateral actions to safeguard its own security and Kemalist traditions. For example, when Turkey launched its largest military offensive in more than a decade into Iraqi Kurdistan in February 2008, it did so with two objectives in mind. The ostensible reason for the Kurdish invasion was to attack the PKK forces in their mountain bases. The second, and the unstated, objective of the attack, according to some staunch Kemalists, was to divert attention from the Islamic-oriented AKP ruling party's decision to legalize head scarves in Turkey's universities.[204]

Notwithstanding regular Turkish saber rattling and military incursions into Iraqi Kurdistan, the Turkish and Iraqi governments have taken steps to elevate and strengthen their relations. For example, On July 10, 2008, for the first time since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, Prime Minister Erdogan headed a high-level Turkish delegation to Iraq to increase the level of bilateral ties between the two countries and establish a "strategic dialogue mechanism" between Ankara and Baghdad.[205] The two sides discussed a wide range of issues, including the possibility of establishing free trade zones in southern and northern Iraq. One issue that bedeviled the entire trip was the presence of the PKK in northern Iraq. Notwithstanding Erdogan's public acknowledgment that Turkey receives support from both the Iraqi central government and the KRG with regards to the "terrorism of the PKK," it was clear that the status of the PKK in northern Iraq remains a stumbling block to the Kurdish-Turkish political ties.[206] For domestic reasons, the KRG cannot launch a full scale attack on the PKK without domestic repercussions among the Iraqi Kurds. At the same time, the Iraqi Kurdish leadership is keenly aware of Turkey's importance as a major economic and political player in Iraqi Kurdistan.

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publicize its involvement in providing the Iraqi dictator with chemical weapons. The crime with which Saddam Hussein was charged and for which he was hanged was his approval of a June 14, 1984 Revolutionary Court decision that had convicted 148 Shi'a Iraqis from the village of Dujail for their alleged involvement in an attack on Saddam Hussein as his convoy was leaving Dujail on July 8, 1982. Dr. Abdul-Haq al-Ani, who served as a legal advisor on Saddam Hussein's defense to his daughter Raghad Saddam Hussein, has published one of the most detailed accounts of Saddam's Hussein's trials from the perspectuives of an Iraqi who is not tied to the current Iraqi system and its American supporters. See his *The Trial of Saddam Hussein* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2008): 207–359.

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